

FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO COOK

How to Roast a Moist Turkey

Savory Bread Stuffings

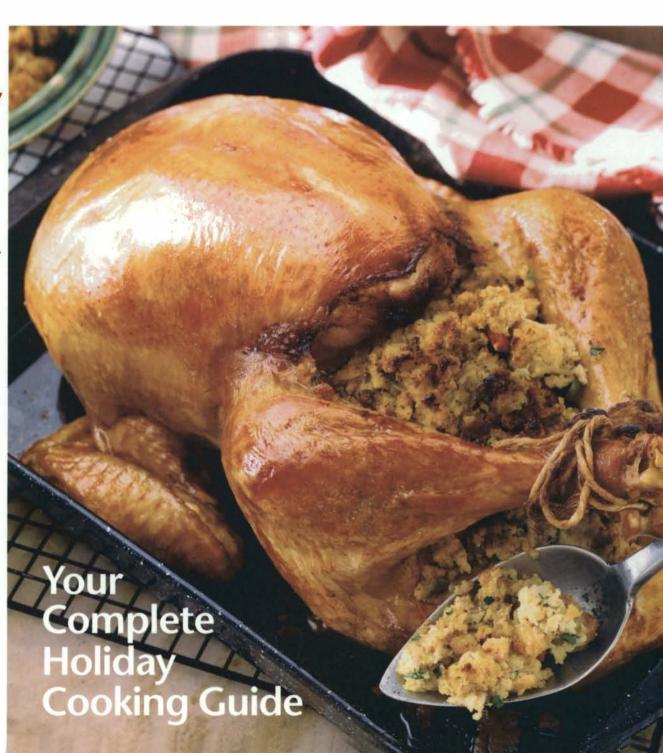
Making Rich, Smooth Gravy

Five Easy Southern Vegetables

An Elegant Roast Pork Christmas Dinner

Irresistible Cookies





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RES HOURS OF PLANNING AND LIANCES DOESN'T HURT, EITHER.



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crème, as they say.



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Cook your best holiday meal ever using our techniques and recipes for roasting a perfect turkey (p. 70), cooking savory stuffings (p. 39), and making ultra-smooth gravy (p. 20).

december 1997/January 1998 ISSUE 24





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Cover photo, Alan Richardson. These pages, clockwise from upper left: Alan Richardson; Ben Fink; Scott Phillips; Mark Ferri; Scott Phillips; Alan Richardson



50 Select top-quality knives so you can slice, chop, mince, and julienne like a pro

George Germon and Johanne Killeen trained as fine artists at the Rhode Island School of Design, went to Italy, and never looked back. Though they're still artists, their studio is now Al Forno, their award-winning restaurant in Providence, Rhode Island—voted number one in the world for casual dining in 1994 by Patricia Wells, food critic for the International Herald Tribune.

George and Johanne's menu in "A Cozy But Elegant Christmas Dinner" (p. 32) is a tasty example of their dedication to using high-quality ingredients to create uncomplicated but deeply satisfying food. They wrote Cucina Simpatica—Robust Trattoria Cooking (HarperCollins 1991), and they're working on a second cookbook, which will be published by Scribner.



Molly Stevens ("How to Make Moist, Delicious Stuffing," p. 39) bought a one-way ticket to France in 1984, determined to learn about French cooking. She worked at bakeries and restaurants, eventually earning a Grand

Diplôme from La Varenne cooking school. Back in the States, she worked at the French Culinary Institute and the New England Culinary Institute as a chef/instructor. Molly lives in Vermont where she is a food writer, editor, teacher, and a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*.

Robert Carter ("Easy Southern Vegetables Make Holiday Meals Festive," p. 44) is the executive chef at the Peninsula Grill in Charleston, South Carolina. Barely a year old, the restaurant is already considered one of the best new restaurants in the country. A graduate of Johnson & Wales cooking school, Robert has been a quest chef at the James Beard House in New York City.

John Ash ("Slow-Grilled Turkey is Smoky-Sweet and Juicy," p. 48) is the Culinary Director of Fetzer Vineyard's Food & Wine Center, in Hopland, California. He is a teacher, television and radio host, as well as the author of From the Earth to the Table—John Ash's



Wine Country Cuisine, which was voted Cookbook of the Year at the 1996 IACP/Julia Child Awards. During a recent rare break from his culinary activities, John climbed Mount Everest.

Amy Albert ("Choosing Great Knives for Confident, Skillful Cooking," p. 50) is an assistant editor for *Fine Cooking* who realized just how much she cherishes her chef's knives when they were temporarily confiscated at Kennedy Airport after she sent her carry-on bag through the security X-ray machine. She has worked

as a press liaison, cook, wine steward, waiter, singer in a Cajun-Zydeco band, actor, and massage therapist.

Flo Braker ("Putting the Buttery Crunch in Nut Brittles," p. 54) is a pastry and chocolate expert, with a

specialty in miniatures. She is a teacher, a columnist, and the author of *The Simple Art of Perfect Baking* (Chapters, 1992) and the award-winning *Sweet Miniatures: The Art of Making Bite-Size Desserts* (William Morrow, 1991). Flo lives in Palo Alto, California, where she's a charter



member of Baker's Dozen, a group of baking professionals and enthusiasts who gather to exchange information in a quest for knowledge and excellence.

Regina Schrambling ("Easy Frittatas for Any Meal," p. 56) studied cooking at the New York Restaurant School and worked as a cook in New York City. She's the author of Squash: A Country Garden Cookbook (Harper-Collins, 1994), and has written for the New York Times, Eating Well, Saveur, Smart Money, and Food Arts. Regina is working on a book on seasonal cooking.

Glenn Mitchell ("Baking Light-as-Air Brioche," p. 59) is a San Francisco area baker who co-owns Grace Baking Company. In 1996, he was chosen to be a member of the three-man American baking team that competed in the worldwide Coupe du Monde de la Boulangerie and won highest honors. When he's not baking, Glenn goes fly-fishing whenever he can.

Abigail Johnson Dodge ("Baking Irresistible Holiday Cookies" p. 64) is the director of *Fine Cooking's* test kitchen and author of *Great Fruit Desserts* (Rizzoli, 1997). She studied at La Varenne and has worked as a pastry chef both in this country and in France. In addition to her restaurant and catering background, Abby is a cooking instructor, recipe developer, and food stylist.

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Here's the place to share your thoughts on our recent articles or your food and cooking philosophies.

Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*,
PO Box 5506, Newtown,
CT 06470-5506, or by e-mail: fc@taunton.com.

What's a guy gotta do to get a good coffee?

I very much enjoyed your article on Signor DiRuocco and his coffee roasting methods ("Artisan Foods," Fine Cooking #22). I'm a caffé appassionato. What caught my eye is the amount of coffee in the cup. I'm sure Sig. DiRuocco would never allow the level to get above one-half cup. Beyond that, you're only getting dark water and a bitter taste, as the grounds are being burnt by the hot water and steam. I'll chalk up the level shown in the cup to the angle at which the photo was taken.

Too much water is just one of the reasons that most American espresso is so bad; another is the poor-quality beans used.

Thank God for people like Sig. DiRuocco. Maybe one day we'll all be able to enjoy a good espresso anywhere we go in this country. As for now, I drink mine at home or in *bella Italia*.

—Noel C. Bon Tempo, M.D., via e-mail

Cooking for drop-in guests

I'm writing in response to Ann Hodgman's humorous piece on impromptu cooking (Fine Cooking #21, p. 94). In the late '40s, I had an excellent Foods course at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia. On an exam, our professor, Eloise Waterhouse, listed several items that might be found in the refrigerator or pantry and asked us to plan a menu and give recipes. We thought this was a quirky kind of question, and back in the dorin, we discussed our ideas.

When I married, I moved to a small town where all the men came home for lunch. My husband would often arrive with unexpected guests, and each time I had to stretch a meal, I would remember my teacher who taught me to think about how to do this and be grateful.

-Margaret D. Sewell, Atlanta

Has your lobster expert ever been to Maine?

Just out of curiosity, I'd like to know where James Peterson learned to shell a lobster. It sure wasn't in Maine.

Most people who know lobsters remove the black, waste-filled intestine from the tail. To shell a tail, simply break off the three end flippers and push the meat out with a finger—no mess and no tools. Then remove the so-called

strip, and the intestine is exposed for easy removal.

And Peterson advocates throwing out legs still containing the sweetest meat in the lobster. Shame on him!

—George Barnes, via e-mail

lim Peterson replies: Thanks for your heartfelt letter. You've rightly guessed that my experience isn't in the Maine lobster industry. I learned as a kitchen apprentice and since then have shelled thousands of lobsters, always in frenetic restaurant kitchens, where there was never time to pick out those slivers of leg meat—the shells and any remaining meat ended up in sauces. As for the intestine, I rarely see it-perhaps because the lobsters I get in retail markets have been out of the ocean for a while. I share your abhorrence of waste; I use the lobster coral, tomalley, and even the shells in my soups and sauces. •

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Good espresso requires

right amount of water.

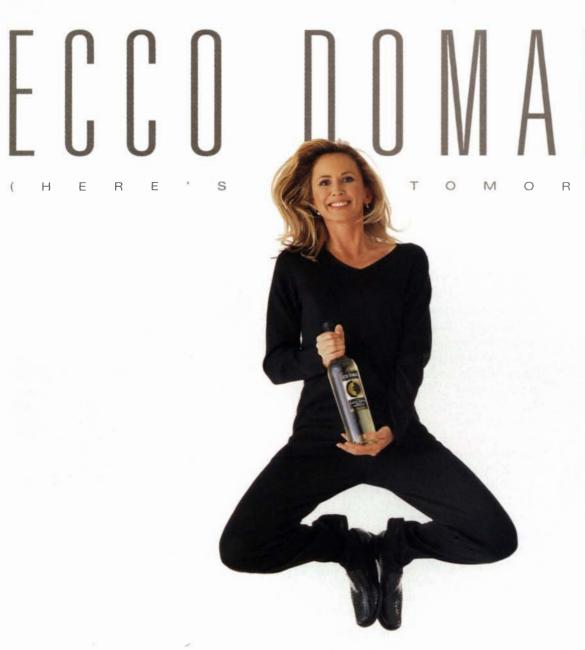
good beans and just the

for fellow enthusiasts

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Can rusty cast iron be revived?

I recently found a great cast-iron skillet at a tag sale, but it's really rusty. Is there any way to condition and revive it?

> —Patrice R. Hughes Calistoga, CA

Gray Bekurs replies: Cast iron isn't easy to damage or destroy, and the rust isn't a problem unless the pan is actually corroded.

Rub down the pan with a Brillo or SOS pad so that there's no more rust. If the skillet wasn't well-seasoned by its previous owner, by clearing the rust, you'll get down to the metal and have a virtually new skillet, ready to be seasoned. If the skillet does have a layer of seasoning, it isn't essential to get down to the bare metal—you just want to get the rust off (the pan might look a bit splotchy at first, but with constant seasoning care, it will even out over time).

To bring that cast iron back to life, you need to re-

Cooking with oil in a castiron pan is really what seasons it, and frequent use keeps the pan in good condition. A well-seasoned cast-iron pan will develop a slick, black finish that's naturally nonstick—easy to cook in and easy to clean. Gray Bekurs is the sales manager for Lodge Manufacturing Company,

What's the difference in salt?

makers of castiron cookware.

Why do some recipes call specifically for kosher salt and not just generic salt? On grocery shelves, I see iodized salt, sea salt, and kosher salt.

sea salt, and kosher salt. Which is used when? What's the difference in cooking?

—Barbara Kramer, Albuquerque, NM

Molly Stevens replies: Despite the different labels, all salt is sodium chloride, a compound essential to our diets and to almost any form of cooking. But there are slight variations of texture, taste, and character, depending on where the salt comes

from and how it's produced.

Table salt, the kind you find most often in supermarkets and on almost everyone's table, is refined rock salt. (All salt is sea salt, but rock salt is from ancient seabeds, now dried up and underground.) Table salt is fine-grained and often contains additives to prevent it from caking. (Pickling salt doesn't contain anticaking

sodium chloride, there are definite differences in taste and texture.

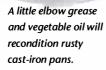
Though all salt is



chemicals because they would cloud the brine.) Iodized table salt has been fortified with iodine, an essential element in our diets.

Kosher salt is rock salt with no additives. Many cooking professionals prefer it because it has large, flaky crystals that are easy to pick up with your fingers—the method most chefs use for salting food. While there's no flavor difference between table and kosher salts, kosher salt's bigger crystals pack more loosely, so a measure of kosher salt will produce a less salty dish than the same measure of table salt. When you're using table salt instead of kosher salt, use about onethird less than the recipe calls for, and vice versa.

Sea salt comes from evaporating sea water and refining the salts left behind. It's sold in both coarse- and fine-grain



season it. Make sure the pan is completely dry. Rub it with a light coat of vegetable oil and let it sit upside down in a 350°F oven for 1 to 1½ hours. You might want to repeat this a few times.

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crystals. Sea salt is more expensive than rock salt but is preferred by some for its pure, mineral-like taste—I've met true connoisseurs who claim they can detect nuances of flavors from the salts of different seas around the world. Molly Stevens is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.

Gelatin: leaf vs. powdered

I've seen recipes that call for powdered gelatin and others that call for leaf gelatin. If I can't find leaf gelatin, can I use the powdered form instead? What's the equivalent amount?

—Leroy C. Wong, Vancouver, British Columbia

Bruce Healy replies: Each form of gelatin has its advocates, but the truth is that powder and sheets produce identical results. The powdered form is standard in the United States, but in France, leaf gelatin is the norm. One envelope of Knox gelatin powder (Knox invented and popularized this form of gelatin) is equivalent in its gelling power to 4½ sheets of leaf gelatin; 1 teaspoon gelatin powder equals 2 sheets of leaf gelatin.

> Use powdered or leaf gelatin in molded custards or fruit desserts.

The procedures for using powdered gelatin and leaf gelatin differ only slightly. At the outset, both types must be softened in cold liquid to prevent them from getting

lumpy when heated. You'll have to squeeze the excess water out of leaf gelatin after you soak it. Depending on the recipe, you then either dissolve the softened gelatin in your hot base mixture, or dissolve it in a little liquid over heat and stir it into the rest of your ingredients at room temperature.

Bruce Healy is the author of The French Cookie Book (William Morrow, 1994) and Mastering the Art of French Pastry (Barrons, 1984). He teaches classes in French pastry across the country.





Oranges and Tangerines Star in Winter Fruit Bowls

here I grew up in northern California, it seemed that every suburban yard had at least one orange tree; in our own yard there were several. One had small, tart oranges that were difficult to peel. We'd dig at the skin but end up just sucking out the sweet juice. Another tree was full of small, sweet, loose-skinned fruits that practically slipped right from their skins. On the east side of the house there was a tree whose fruit we only picked

once. Those oranges were so mouth-puckeringly bitter that we spat out the pulp and never tried them again. But the oranges that we loved best grew on a tree in our neighbor's yard. My brother and I would climb the fence and steal those fruits, which were big, very sweet, and a cinch to peel.

Though I didn't realize it, I was actually learning a lot about fruit varieties back then. The oranges that we loved so much from our neighbor's tree were navels,

the perfect snacking orange. Those small, hard-to-peel fruits were what are known as common oranges. They're prized for their juice and not meant for eating out of hand. The oranges that were too bitter to eat were Sevilles. They make wonderful marmalade, but as we learned early on, they're not for snacking. And those sweet, snap-to-peel fruits were tangerines—a name that's used interchangeably with mandarins.

ORANGES AND TANGERINES IN THE KITCHEN

Oranges and tangerines are perhaps best loved as snacks. They're great fruit for just eat-

Navel oranges are easy to peel, seedless, sweet, and juicy—the classic eating orange. They make delicious juice, too. Look for them from November through May.



Valencias are late-ripening common oranges. They have no rival as a juice orange. Their season extends from early summer to October.



Blood oranges are usually harder to peel than other oranges, but they're very juicy and mildly sweet. Enjoy them from December through mid-May.



Seville oranges are very fragrant but dry and quite sour. They're high in pectin and rich with essential oils, however—ideal qualities for making marmalade. They're in season from January through March.

markets from December to May.

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AT THE MARKET

ing, but they also make delicious juice, marmalades, and candies, too. Crimson slices of blood oranges look spectacular on top of a tart, and their juice can be used to flavor custards, ice creams, and sherbets. Oranges and tangerines play a role in savory dishes as well. In Sicily, a much-loved salad combines orange slices with red onion and arugula. Duck à l'orange is an oldfashioned French classic. and in Provence, cooks often add a strip of orange peel to brighten the flavor of the earthy stews called daubes.

WINTER IS THE HEART OF CITRUS SEASON

Though you'll find some varieties of orange in the market year-round, they're at their best and least expensive in winter. The many varieties of tangerines start arriving in the market just as autumn

comes to an end and stay there through the spring.

Most fresh oranges and tangerines in the markets come from California or Arizona. Texas and Florida also grow considerable crops but sellthe bulk of their harvest as processed products like juice. Orange trees thrive in the heat of the Mediterranean, but all orange varieties, as well as tangerines, trace their origins back to China.

YOU CAN'T JUDGE AN ORANGE BY ITS COLOR

Selecting a bright, shiny fruit won't guarantee that you've chosen a flavorful orange. The color of a citrus peel is determined by light, climate, and (in some cases) additives, and doesn't necessarily indicate the quality of the fruit inside. Nor does size promise a juicy, sweet fruit. Larger oranges that are lightweight

may have a thick rind and dry, flavorless flesh.

A heavy fruit is a juicy fruit. A ripe orange with a high juice content will be heavy and firm, not light and spongy. Bruises can signal that the fruit has begun to ferment. A loose peel on an orange can mean dry fruit, but it's normal on a tangerine. Look out, though, for tangerines with extremely loose, puffy peels: the fruit has likely passed its prime.

Oranges and tangerines will be fine if stored at room temperature for a few days, but they'll last longer and taste better if refrigerated.

Ethel Brennan lives in San Francisco. She wrote Citrus (Chronicle, 1996) and is currently writing Herbs of Provence, also for Chronicle.

More at the market

Winter is a great time to check out cool-weather-loving veggies and old-fashioned fruits:

- ◆ Brussels sprouts to caramelize by high-heat roasting or sautéing, adding toasted walnuts or bacon for flavor.
- ◆ Endive for lovely white winter salads with blue cheese, walnuts, and diced apples or poached quince.
- ◆ Fuyu persimmons to liven up creamy custards, fruit chutneys, and quick breads.
- ◆ Pomegranates for their crimson juice to glaze duck or pork and their jewel-like seeds to add to salads and sautés.
- ◆ Spinach, baby turnips, and wild mushrooms for puréeing into velvety cream soups.

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December and January.



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2 tbs. EDEN Toasted Sesame Oil 1 package EDEN Shiitake Mushrooms, soaked in 1 cup hot water for 20 mins. 1 medium carrot, cut into matchsticks 1 medium onion, sliced

2 cups Chinese cabbage or bok choy 3 tbs. EDEN Shoyu

2 tbs. grated ginger

1/4 cup EDEN Tamari Almonds, sliced

Cook pasta. Rinse, drain; mix with 1 tbs. oil. Set aside. Reserve shiitake liquid, discard stems and slice tops. Heat remaining oil, sauté onion. Add carrots, shiitakes and soaking liquid, simmer for 5 minutes. Mix in pasta, greens, shoyu and ginger. Cover and cook for 2-3 more minutes. Add almonds.

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Riedel Basic glasses enhance wine-tasting —affordably

The first time I drank out of Riedel's original tasting glasses, I was floored. A young red Bordeaux that I'd known to be closed-in practically jumped out of the glass to strut its aromas and flavors. The goblets added nuances that usually come with decanting or age, and they looked great, too. But at \$60 each, they were a bit pricey for my budget.

So I was interested to learn about Riedel Basic, a new line of smaller, affordable wine glasses based on the most popular Riedel designs. I poured two glasses of a big, young California red: one into one of my everyday wineglasses and the other into the Riedel Basic glass. While the stuff in my glass smelled fine, with plenty of perfume and flavor, the

wine in the Riedel Basic showed a lot more character and complexity in the same short amount of time. Riedel claims that the particular shapes of its glasses enhance the balance of the wine—-I was skeptical, but I think they're right.

Riedel Basic glasses have short stems in order to fit into the dishwasher, which is handy, but I prefer the look and feel of long-stemmed wine glasses, so I wouldn't set my dinner table with these. But the glasses enhance tasting, and I love how they show off a wine's subtleties. Riedel Basic Champagne, white wine, and red wine glasses retail for about \$9 each.

For information, call 516/567-7595 or visit the Riedel web site at www.riedelcrystal.com.
—Amy Albert, assistant editor for Fine Cooking.



Why didn't someone think of stainless-steel $\frac{2}{3}$ - and $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup measuring cups sooner? Order these two measures from the King Arthur Flour catalog (800/343-3002) for \$10.95, or a complete set of seven of the cups, including the hard-to-find $\frac{1}{8}$ -cup (standard coffee measure), from the Wooden Spoon (800/431-2207) for \$27. A 2-cup stainless measure is also sold in both catalogs.

—Susie Middleton, associate editor for Fine Cooking

Fermipan yeast is fast and foolproof

As a professional baker and bakery consultant living in Montreal, I've been lucky to have access to Fermipan, a really terrific "instant" (or "bread machine") yeast. Happily, I can now recommend Fermipan to home bakers, as Chef's Catalog (800/338-3232) and La Cuisine (800/521-1176) now carry it.

Unlike some fast or rapidrising yeasts, which are just finer granulations or extrusions of active dry yeast, Fermipan is made from a different yeast strain

that has been biologically perfected to be just

about foolproof. It's tolerant of high fat, sugar, or acid content in a recipe (such as rich coffee cake) and of temperature fluctuations (freezing a yeast dough, cool-rise, etc.). Despite the fact that Fermipan is ideal for bread machines, it still works well for more rustic, slow-rising breads; simply use about 25% less.

Fermipan comes in 1-pound bricks for about \$5, but \frac{1}{4}-ounce} (8g) sachets will follow. Once opened, keep the yeast in the freezer for three months. Call Lallemand, Inc. (800/387-3876); or visit Fermipan's web site at www.betterbaking.com.

—Marcy Goldman, author of A Treasure of Jewish Holiday Baking (Doubleday, fall 1998)

Events

FLAVOR! FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia; November 21–23 Fine Cooking readers are invited to a holiday dining and entertaining event with demonstrations by some of our renowned chefs; holiday gift and entertaining ideas; specialty foods; cookware; and wine tastings. Call 800/849-0248.

YOUNTVILLE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS Yountville, California; November 28 During a street fair filled with holiday entertainments, Napa Valley's acclaimed wines will be paired with food from Yountville's award-winning restaurants. Area chefs will give demonstrations. Call 800/959-3604. CHITLIN STRUT Salley, South Carolina; November 29
More than 10,000 pounds of breaded and fried chitlins are served to about 60,000 people at this festival. Also called chitterlings, chitlins—or pig intestines—are a southem specialty. Call 803/258-3485.

COOKING CLASSES
Hay Day, Ridgefield and
Westport, Connecticut,
and Scarsdale, New York
December 4: Holiday Desserts with author Lauren
Groveman. December 9: A
Fabulous Christmas Dinner
with Betty Rosbottom. January 19–21: Entertaining
101 with authors Katherine
West DeFoyd and Linda
Eckhardt. For locations and
details, call 203/319-2777.

CHRISTMAS PICKLE FESTIVAL Berrien Springs, Michigan; December 6–7 Festival foods include dillpickle sausages, pickle bread, pickle relishes, chocolate-covered pickles, plus a recipe contest for pickle dishes. Call 616/ 471-1202.

Send April and May event listings (by January 1) to Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or e-mail (fc@taunton.com).

4

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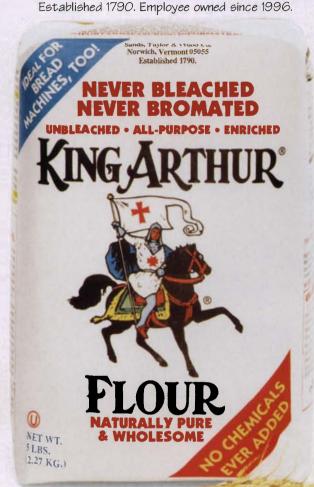
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Smooth, full-bodied Vietnamese coffee is worth the wait

In Vietnam, drinking coffee is a friendly ritual, a time to linger over conversation in a café. Authentic Vietnamese coffee requires patience, as it can only be made in individual stainless-steel drip filters. The coffee takes several minutes to steep and drip through the tiny holes of the filter, but this intensely flavored coffee is worth the wait.

These filters are now available through the Williams-Sonoma catalog (800/541-2233; two for \$16), or you can find them at Asian supply stores or groceries. Buy a fine-grind dark-roast coffee or order a special Vietnamese blend from Capricorn Coffees & Teas of San Francisco (800/541-0758).

To make one cup of coffee: bring 1 cup water to a boil, measure 2 to 3 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk into a glass mug, and put the filter on top of the mug. Fill the base with 3 tablespoons coffee. Pour a small amount of the boiling water (1 to 2 tablespoons) over the coffee to let the

grounds expand. Place the filter insert over the coffee, fill it with 4 to 5 more ounces hot water, put the lid on, and wait for the coffee to drip through. To serve hot, mix the milk and coffee together, adding the remaining hot water to taste. Or serve with lots of ice; it's delicious cold.

—Mai Pham, author of The Best of Vietnamese & Thai Cooking (Prima Publishing, 1996).



Cyber kitchen: Buy cookbooks on the Web

If you're looking for a particular cookbook or you just want to browse through the cookbook "aisles," check out www.amazon.com—the "earth's biggest bookstore," with access to 2.5 million books, both in and out of print. Search by author or title, or click on "Cooking, Food & Wine," for hundreds of books in 30 categories, from Asian to Vegetarian. Heavily discounted prices, a secure ordering form, and fast shipping make life far too easy for cookbook addicts.

—Susie Middleton

Wigwam is top-quality country ham by mail

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hickory-smoked, salt-

cured, dry-aged ham

is available cooked (11 to 12 pounds) and uncooked (15 to 16 pounds) for around \$80. It doesn't require refrigeration, and it will handily feed a large

the holidays.
While Edwards usually has a good supply of hams this time of year, call early (800/222-4267) to be sure to get one; allow a week for shipping.

crowd over

—Susie Middleton

Events

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including cooking demos,
Reveillon dinners, a medieval Madrigal Dinner, Celtic
Christmas Week, a German
Christmas Dinner, parades,
storytelling tours of historic
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Creek Inn, San Francisco)
and chef Russell Siu (3660
On The Rise, Oahu). For
reservations, call Fem at
800/659-4100, ext. 236.

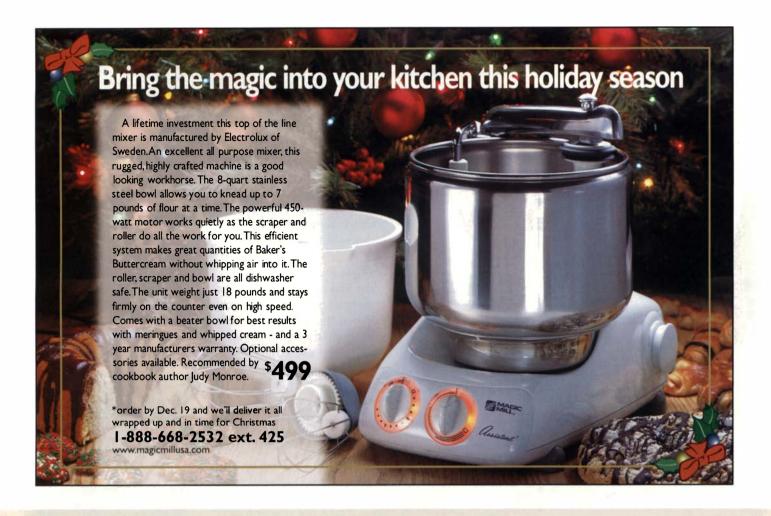
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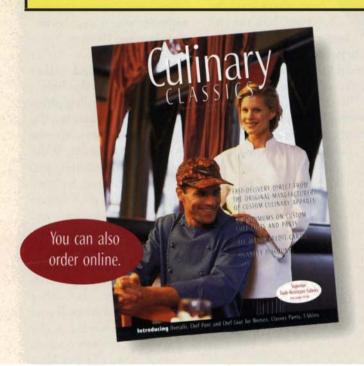
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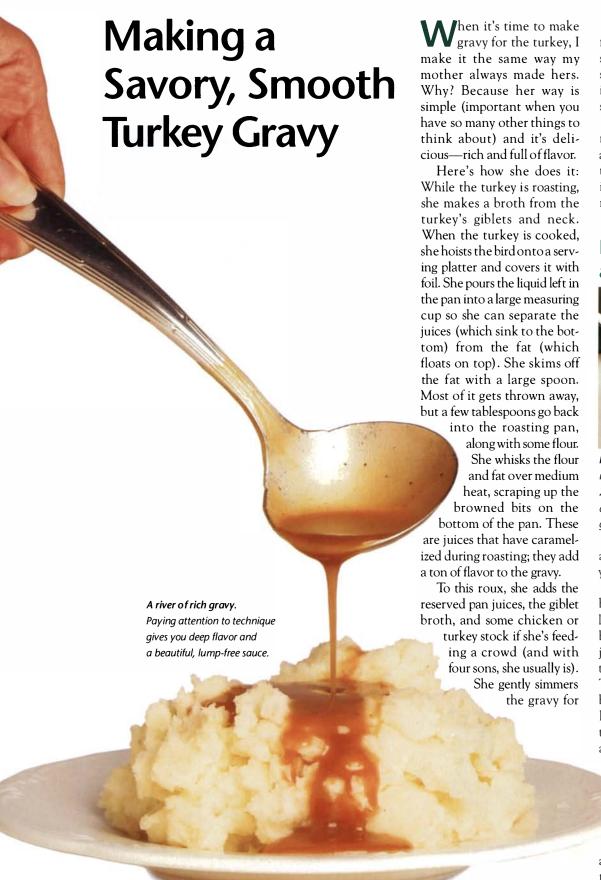
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10 minutes to cook away the floury flavor and thicken it slightly. A little taste, a little salt and pepper, and the gravy is ready to be strained into a saucepan or gravy boat.

My mother can probably

My mother can probably make her gravy blindfolded, and she probably doesn't even think about all the techniques involved. But if you're new to making gravy, it's good to keep

Begin by making a quick broth



Make a broth from the giblets and neck. Add a halved onion, about 20 small sprigs of parsley, a bay leaf, and enough water to cover. Simmer qently for at least 1½ hours.

a few things in mind so that yours will be as good as hers.

Don't let the drippings burn. The drippings are the liquid fat and juices released by the bird as it cooks. If the juices land on a roasting pan that's too hot, they can burn. To prevent this, use a heavy-based roasting pan that's just large enough to hold the turkey. If the pan is too big, the area not covered by the bird will get too hot. A too-thin

will get too hot. A too-thin
pan can also cause
burned juices. If your
pan is too big or too
flimsy, coarsely chop an
onion or two and sprinkle it
around the turkey in the pan
to act as a heat absorber. If you

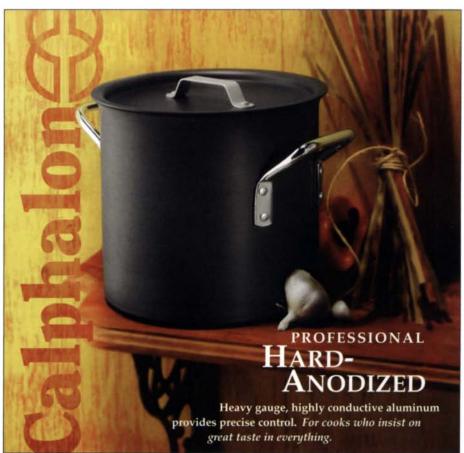


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TECHNIQUE CLASS

A smooth roux and tasty drippings equal great gravy



Pour the pan drippings into a large measuring cup to separate the juices from the fat. The juices will sink to the bottom while the fat floats on top. Spoon some of the fat (see Gravy Math, below) back into the pan. Pour off the rest of the fat and discard, reserving the juices.



Make a roux by adding some flour to the fat (see Gravy Math, below, for amount). Whisk the flour and the fat together over medium heat, scraping up the caramelized juices, until you have a smooth paste.



When the flour smells toasty, whisk in the liquids—the reserved juices, the giblet broth, and any extra stock needed according to Gravy Math.



4 Simmer the gravy to cook off the floury taste and to thicken it a bit. Continue whisking occasionally for about 10 minutes. Strain the gravy, season it with salt and pepper, and keep it warm until ready to serve.

gravy for about 10 minutes to cook off the floury taste.

Tailor the gravy to your taste. While the technique I've outlined makes a delicious gravy, you can embellish on it without muting the flavor of the roast. For a bright, fresh flavor, add 1 or 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh herbs (chives, parsley, chervil, basil, or tarragon) a few minutes before serving. For a luxurious touch, stir in 1 or 2 tablespoons of soaked, drained, and chopped dried porcini mushrooms or morels. Strain the soaking liquid through a coffee filter and add that, too. Roasted garlic adds great flavor to gravy and can act as the thickener. Work the roasted cloves through a food mill or strainer to extract the pulp and stir it into the gravy.

My mother's favorite addition is the cooked giblets and neck meat. She'd chop these finely, but not *too* finely, and heat them in the gravy just before serving. This "lumpy" gravy is still my favorite.

James Peterson is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. He's currently revising his awardwinning Sauces (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991). ◆

do this, leave the onion out of the giblet broth.

Be sure there's ample gravy. There's an unfair relationship between a perfectly cooked stuffed turkey and pan drippings. If a stuffed bird is cooked so it's nice and juicy, there may not be enough of the delicious juices—the liquid left in the pan minus the fat—to make enough gravy. (Ironically, an overcooked, unstuffed turkey releases lots of juices.) This means you often have to add extra stock. Homemade turkey or chicken

stock is best. If using canned stock, use a low-sodiumone or the gravy will be salty. To decide how much stock to add, measure the juices with the giblet broth; add stock to get the amount of liquid you need (see Gravy Math, right).

Make the gravy smooth and pourable, but not watery. If the gravy is too thin, thicken it with a slurry of water and flour. Blend 2 tablespoons flour with 3 tablespoons water and add this, a bit at a time, to the simmering gravy until it thickens. Then simmer the

Gravy Math

Figure on about $\frac{1}{3}$ cup gravy per person. To determine the amount of liquid you need, measure the turkey juices (the pan drippings

minus the fat) and add enough giblet broth to get the amount of gravy you need. If there still isn't enough liquid, add homemade or low-salt chicken or turkey stock.

servings	liquid	fat	flour
6	2 cups	2 Tbs.	3 Tbs.
8	2 ² / ₃ cups	2½ Tbs.	4 Tbs.
10	31/3 cups	3 Tbs.	5 Tbs.
12	4 cups	4 Tbs.	6 Tbs.
14	4 ² / ₃ cups	4½ Tbs.	7 Tbs.
16	51/3 cups	5 Tbs.	7½ Tbs.

As a general rule, use about 1 tablespoon of fat and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of flour for each cup of liquid. We've done the math for you (see chart).

22 FINE COOKING



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Sparklers range from dry to sweet

Sparkling wines get their sweetness level from the sugar that's added during a step in winemaking called *dosage* (pronounced doe-ZAHJ).

Brut and extra-brut are very dry, with just a tiny bit of sugar added. Sometimes sparkling wines are labeled brut nature, nature, and brut zero. These are even drier, with no sugar added at all. Extra dry (or extra sec) is just a little sweeter, sec (which paradoxically, means dry) is quite sweet, and demi-sec is the sweetest.

Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier are the most commonly used varietals, on their own or mixed with other varietals. When a sparkling wine is principally from one or the other, it has a special name. Blanc de blancs is made with all or mostly Chardonnay; it's often more delicate in style. Blanc de noirs is made with Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, or both. It's often fuller-bodied.

Savoring Sparkling Wines Throughout Your Holiday Meal

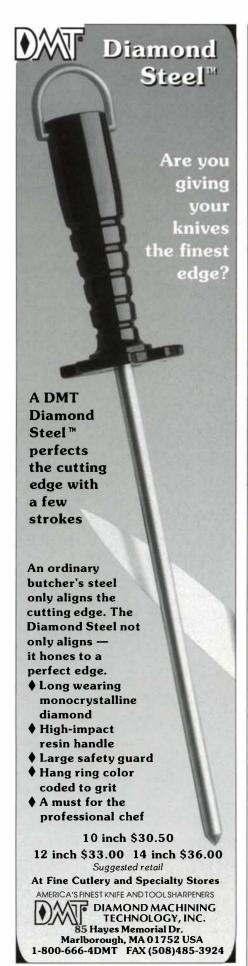
ere come the holidays, and it's time topop those corks—gently, of course, with just a soft *phhhht* rather than a full-tilt pop—and clink those tall, slim flutes.

Whether it's domestic or imported, inexpensive or pricey, sparkling wine can make your holiday party really festive. (Remember, it's only called Champagne if it comes from the Champagne region, even though many houses use

traditional Champagne methods.) But there are all kinds of bubbly, and not all of them go well with all food. Prices vary, too. Here's how to select a sparkling wine that will equal your other holiday offerings.

Brut (very dry) sparklers work with just about every course except dessert. Start out with a delicate blanc de blancs; serve it with appetizers. Salty foods will punch up the bubbles in a sparkling

24 FINE COOKING





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Because of its crisp tartness, brut matches well with lemon sauces or citrus dressings; it can also cut through cream sauce and butter sauces. Because of the slight amount of sugar added, brut can handle mild spice, too.

Sweeter sparklers love dessert. The sugar in desserts will throw a brut out of whack, so try a sec (quite sweet), a demi-sec (the sweetest), or a good Moscato d'Asti from Italy. When you're pairing wine with dessert, you'll

enjoy both more if what's in the glass is at least as sweet as what's on the plate.

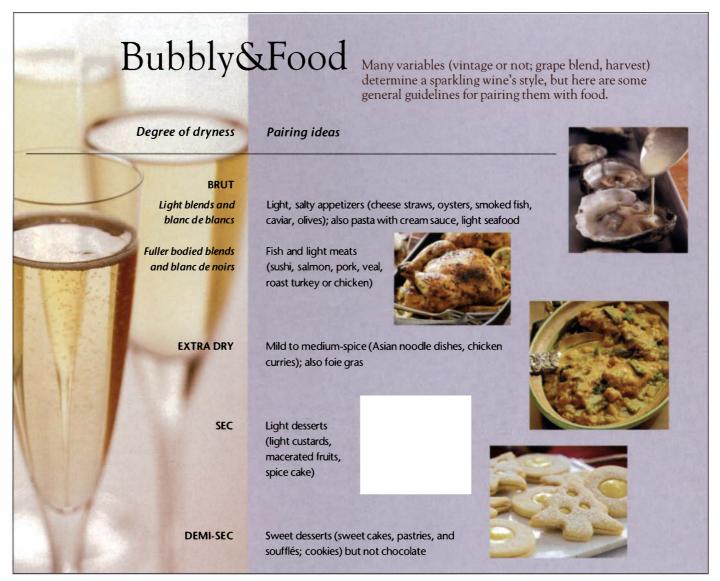
A good bottle needn't blow your budget. There's something delicious in every price range—it's actually easier to find values in sparkling wines than in still wines. Two Australian bruts—Wolf Blass. on the delicate side and the fuller-bodied Orlando Carrington—are delicious values, at about \$11 each. Prosecco, a dry sparkler from Italy, costs about \$12. And French sparkling wines from outside Champagne offer good values, too. Try Bouvet nonvintage brut or rosé from the Loire (about \$12), or Cremant d'Alsace from Willm (about \$14).

On the domestic front, Domaine Chandon, Gloria Ferrer, and Mumm Napa ring in at about \$15 and are often deeply discounted, with premium bottlings at \$5 to \$10 more. Even top-shelf pours such as Iron Horse and "J" by Jordan come in at around \$25. It's hard to find as many Chardonnays or Cabernets of comparable quality for that price.

But if you want to splurge for a big night or a blow-'emaway gift, you'll have no trouble. In the \$20 to \$30something range, you'll find fine examples of nonvintage Champagne such as Veuve Cliquot, Perrier-Jouët, Louis Roederer, and Billecart-Salmon—and during the holidays you can usually find such top-notch Champagnes on sale, especially by the case.

With a vintage date, \$50 and up (way up) is the norm. Look to Bollinger, Taittinger, Krug, and, of course, Dom Perignon for benchmarks of the style. All these producers, and many others, also make rosé Champagnes, usually at even higher prices.

Rosina Tinari Wilson often enjoys a glass of bubbly in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she teaches and writes about wine.



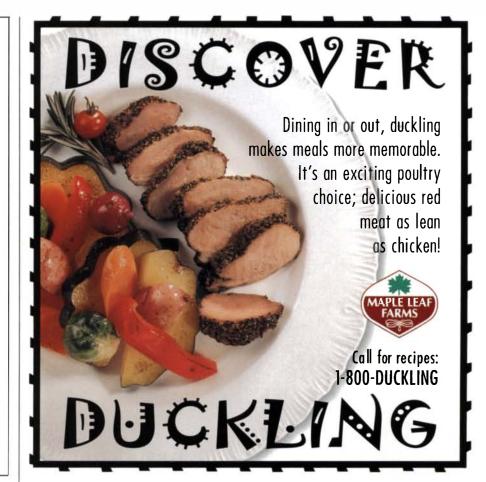
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Pasta insert is handy for straining stock

I've discovered a handy use for my pasta insert while preparing stock. I put all the ingredients (bones, vegetables, etc.) into the insert and put the insert into the stockpot. When the stock is finished, I simply lift the insert, drain, and deposit the waste into the trash. Then I pass the liquid through a strainer lined with cheesecloth. No more awkward maneuvers to pour the scalding liquid and bones out of the stockpot.

> —Laura Mack, Boise, ID

Paper-covered turkey is moister

To cook a moist turkey, roast at 450°F for 30 minutes and then reduce the heat to 350°F

key with a tented brown paper bag. To make the tent, cut off one large side

of a large brown paper grocery bag. Then brush the bag all over with

peanut or vegetable oil until saturated. Remove the tent for the last 20 minutes of roasting to crisp up the turkey's skin.

—Virginia Teichner, Ridgefield, CT

Crack holiday nuts with vise-grip pliers

Vise-grip pliers are great for cracking nuts for holiday baking. The design greatly reduces the force needed to crack hard-shelled nuts. Turn the adjustment knob to



Try a pasta pot for making stock. Use the insert to hold ingredients, which can then be easily separated and discarded when the stock has finished cooking.

handle different shapes and to apply precise pressure to leave nut meat intact.

> —David Fong, Long Beach, CA

Make a nonstick surface with lecithin capsules

When I'm working with a sticky bread dough or making candy, I use lecithin—available at health-food stores in gelatin capsules—to help

keep the dough or candy from sticking to the work surface. (Lecithin is the active ingredient in nonstick food sprays; since those products have oil as carriers, I prefer not to use them.) I cut the gelatin capsule with kitchen shears, squeeze out the lecithin, and spread it very thin. I mop up any excess with a towel, leaving a thin film of lecithin on the work surface. When finished, I scrape the surface and





clean it with soap and water. Lecithin is very slippery stuff, so remember that a little bit goes a long way.

> —Bill Moran, San Diego, TX

Store cooking wine in mini bottles

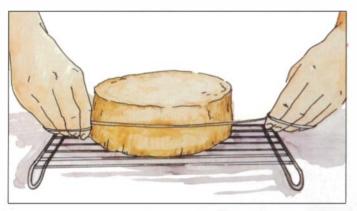
I buy those four-packs of small wine bottles for cooking since each is a cup, they come with screw tops, and they fit well in the fridge. Keep the used bottles and refill them later with leftover wine. If you fill them right to the top, there isn't much air to spoil the taste of the wine. They keep well in the fridge until the next sauce or braise.

—Paul-Marcel St. Onge, Chandler, AZ

Cut clean cake layers with floss

I've found a way to cut a cake into horizontal layers easily and cleanly. Using a sharp knife, mark the desired location with a shallow cut around the circumference of the cake. Then stretch dental floss tightly between your hands and saw gently back and forth beginning at one point of the initial cut, gradually bringing your hands together.

> —Helen D. Conwell, Fairhope, AL



Usedental floss to divide cake into layers. After marking the cake with a knife, hold a length of dental floss taut and saw gently back and forth.

Cook cabbage with a dash of vinegar

To cut down on odors when cooking cabbage, cauliflower, and other notoriously smelly vegetables, add a little vinegar to the cooking water.

— Faye Field, Longview, TX

A quick and safe way to defrost meat

I don't like to defrost frozen meat in a microwave. Worse yet is allowing the meat to sit out at room temperature. When I don't have time to allow the meat to thaw in the refrigerator, here's what I do to speed things up: I put the frozen meat into a zip-top plastic bag and force out all the excess air. Then I plunge



Wolf

TIPS

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(MI)

the meat into a sink full of cold water. I periodically work the package with my hands to loosen up the meat. As the water warms, I add more cold water, or throw a few ice cubes in.

— R.B. Himes, Vienna, OH

Use a baby brush to clean mushrooms

The special brushes for mushrooms that you see in cookware stores and catalogs are rather expensive for single-use tools. I found a viable substitute in a department store for less than \$2—a baby's hair brush. It has very soft bristles that won't abrade the mushrooms, and it works great. Mine says "It's a Boy!" on it, but the mushrooms don't seem to notice.

—Russ Shumaker, Richmond, VA

Roast chestnuts a few at a time for easy peeling

The trick to peeling chestnuts is to roast a few at a time and peel them while they're still warm. First, with a sharp paring knife, cut a small slit in the flat side of each chestnut. Then put just six of them on a baking sheet and roast them in a 425°F oven for 15 to 20 minutes. Peel them as quickly as you can, while they're still warm, using oven mitts if you have to. If the chestnuts are allowed to cool before peeling. the papery brown skin under the shell will stick to the nuts like glue. Repeat the roasting procedure, six at a time (or more if you're a fast peeler) until you've peeled all the chestnuts you need for your recipe.

> —Betsy Race, Euclid, Ohio

Replace salt shaker with a salt jar

Since a cook's most useful tool is certainly his or her hands, try using your fingers to add salt to food. You'll be able to control the amount far better than by using a salt shaker. Choose a glass, ceramic, or plastic jar with a lid and an opening wide enough for your hand to fit through. Fill it with kosher or sea salt. Both cling to food better and have a cleaner flavor. The feel of the salt in

your fingers will become a valuable measurement tool.

—Phyllis Kirigin, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Replace royal icing with melted white chocolate

Everyone loves the contrast of snowy royal icing piped on dark gingerbread cookies. I have a trick that's easier than making royal icing and doesn't involve using raw egg whites. I melt white chocolate in a double boiler or a microwave and pipe it onto my gingerbread and chocolate cookies. It looks just as pretty as icing, and people claim it tastes even better.

—Elaine A. Phillips, Nashville, TN

Add an egg white to shortbread

I've found that adding one egg white to a bunch of crumbly shortbread dough will make it hold together and handle well. It doesn't affect the flavor at all.

> — S. Ryan Redwood City, CA

Keep bleach solution in a spray bottle

I keep a spray bottle of 10% bleach solution (one part bleach to nine parts water) under my kitchen sink. It's very handy to use in conjunction with soap and water to disinfect cutting boards and countertops after preparing meats and to help avoid crosscontamination. I also spray the bleach solution on my kitchen sponges to keep them fresher longer.

—Janet de Carteret, Bellevue, WA

An easier, neater way to chop bacon

I keep my bacon in the freezer, and when I want to sauté a little, I remove a few strips from the freezer and cut them into small pieces with kitchen scissors directly over the sauté pan. It's a lot neater than chopping bacon on a cutting board.

—Jane Morgan, Nashville, TN ◆



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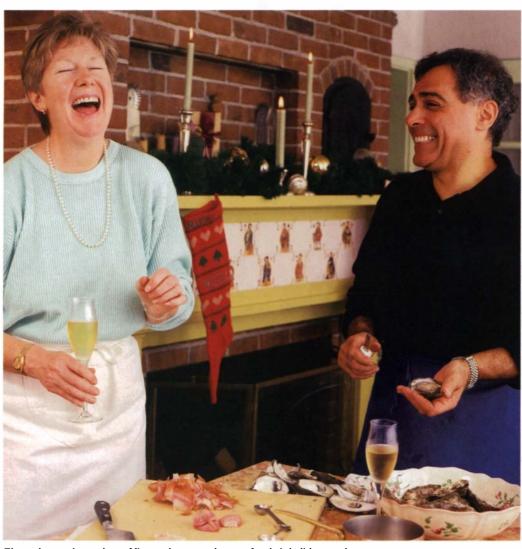
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A Cozy But Elegant Christmas Dinner

Cranberry-glazed pork, crisp potatoes Anna, and a triple caramel cake star in this very special but very manageable menu

BY JOHANNE KILLEEN & GEORGE GERMON



The authors enjoy a glass of fizz as they start the prep for their holiday meal.





SOURCES Caviar:

Maison Glass (Scarsdale, New York) 914/725-1662; 800/U-CALL-MG

Polarica (San Francisco) 415/647-1300; 800/GAME-USA

Wild Game (Chicago) 773/278-1661

Caviarteria (New York City) 212/759-7410: 800/4-CAVIAR

Oysters: Legal Seafood Market (Boston) 617/787-2050; 800/343-5804

Atlantic Seafood Direct (Maine) 207/596-7152: 800/227-1116

Olympia Oyster (Washington state) 360/426-3354

or us, Christmas and cooking have always been synonymous. When we were children, holiday cooking was a family affair for both of our families. George's mom would make her famous ravioli and gravy and ricotta fritters. His father would bake cheese pita and baklava. My mother often chose an unusual recipe for Christmas dinner from her favorite cookbook by Vincent Price (yes, that Vincent Price he and his wife Mary were great cooks).

George and I like the idea of serving something a

little different for the big meal, too. But for us, different doesn't mean exotic. The menu we offer here is full of traditional flavors that are warm and comforting, perfect for a New England winter's evening: oysters in cream, cheesy-buttery noodles, a cranberry-molasses glaze on succulent roast pork, nutty celery root and potatoes, a salad of tangy oranges, and deep, mellow caramel cake.



Simple and sophisticated, these oysters bathed in cream and shallots are quick to make.

coated with cream, shallots, and butter—as a way to begin a special meal. If you don't have a good local source for oysters, consider mail-ordering some (see Sources, left). They won't be inexpensive, but the quality will be good. You can keep oysters in the refrigerator for up to two days before serving. Fit a shallow pan with a rack, spread the oysters on it, and top them with ice. Cover the whole thing loosely with a cloth. Be sure the oysters aren't actually sitting in water, and don't cover them with plastic—

they need to breathe. Rinse well under cold running water before you shuck them. and handle them gently or they'll tighten up.

Taste pure flavors in a simple pasta. For our second course, we'll serve a simple but lavish pasta: wide, silky ribbons of pasta called pappardelle (pronounced pahpahr-DEHL-lay), tossed with butter and good-quality Parmesan cheese and topped with a poached egg and caviar. The

pasta is a delicate background for the salty caviar, the sweet, nutty cheese, and the earthiness of the egg. Adding a bit of the pasta cooking water to the butter lightens the sauce and creates a creamy emulsion.

In this dish, it's important to use real caviar, not substitutes like lumpfish roe. Good-quality caviar costs an average of \$40 per ounce, so it's indeed a luxury that makes the dinner special. If your local stores don't carry good fresh caviar, you can order it (see Sources, left). You can also make this dish without caviar, adding some delicate fresh herbs such as chervil, parsley, or dill instead.

UNCOMPLICATED DISHES MAKE UP A DELICIOUS, HASSLE-FREE MENU

On Christmas morning, we wake to do what we love best—cook for each other and for close friends—so we plan a menu that's simple enough to make without much advance preparation. This menu does need a little last-minute cooking, but we think this adds some action and fun to the meal. Once the main course arrives, service is simple so you can settle in for some good conversation. (See Countdown, p. 36.)

Try oysters and cream for a festive starter. You can't beat these barely warmed ovsters—luxuriously



With a thick towel, hold the oyster flat side up, pressed firmly against the work surface—don't hold it in midair. Place the tip of an oyster knife in the "Achilles heel," and then push and turn until you feel a snap.



Twist the knife fully to pry the shells farther apart. Slide the knife along the top of the shell, cutting the muscle.

lose any flavorful juice. Cut the meat free from the bottom shell.



Salty, nutty, and earthy flavors blend in this easy but unusual pasta. A glistening dollop of caviar is the flavorful, festive garnish.

Glaze the juicy roast pork with a sweet-tart cranberry marinade. Our main dish is perhaps not an obvious choice for Christmas dinner, but it's one of our favorite recipes: Roast Pork Shoulder with Cranberry-Molasses Glaze. The pork sits on a bed of sliced onions during roasting. The onions melt and mingle with the pork drippings, producing a yummy sauce.

Give your roast a rest to bring out its succulent best. After the roast has finished cooking, allow the meat to rest for at least 30 minutes before carving. This fairly long rest is crucial to making the roast juicy and tender—in fact, it's key to any roast. The resting time allows the meat fibers to relax and the juices to redistribute evenly throughout the roast.

Serve crispy potato and celery root Anna and a refreshing orange salad with the pork. For our side dish, we're borrowing from the classic French potato recipe *pommes Anna* and adding some celery root for a more complex and nutty flavor.

The outside of a celery root looks like a gnarly brown bulb. Choose a firm one, with no sign of bruising or mold. The flesh darkens when peeled, so if you peel it ahead, drop it into a bowl of cold lemon water.

We usually serve salad as a separate course, but for this menu, we'd serve a salad of sliced, peeled blood oranges with frisée along with the main course. Make a vinaigrette with the juice and pulp of one blood orange, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, a bit of sugar and salt to taste, and about ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil.

Bake a caramel cake that's not fancy, just fabulous. This deceptively simple cake is moist and rich with a triple dose of caramel. I make one caramel sauce: a third goes into the cake batter itself, a third



"We design menus full of delicious flavors and satisfying textures," say authors George Germon and Johanne Killeen, "but we leave out the fussy techniques. We want time to relax and enjoy the food, wine, and each other:"

How to layer and bake a crisp potato Anna

COUNTDOWN

It may look like there's a lot of last-minute activity, but we've just broken down the recipes into small steps to help you choreograph your cooking and serving.

A day ahead

prepare glaze and onions for pork grate cheese for pasta wash greens make vinaigrette slice oranges

Day of the meal

make cake
marinate pork
poach eggs (hold in
cold water)
roast pork, timing it
so it's done about
45 min. before
meal

Before the meal

peel and slice celery root and potatoes remove pork from oven (leave to rest) degrease sauce assemble and bake Anna shuck oysters heat pasta water cook oysters; serve (Anna's still in oven) remove Anna and keep warm cook pasta; serve slice pork toss salad serve main course sit down, relax, serve cake



Start with a hot, heavy pan and the potatoes. Add a few spoonfuls of clarified butter to the heated pan, and arrange potato slices in overlapping circles. Drizzle on more butter; sprinkle with salt and pepper.

gets drizzled on top for a chewy caramel glaze, and the last third gets gently folded into whipped cream to make a marbled cream topping for each slice.

Warm Oysters Bathed in Cream & Shallots

If you shuck the oysters and mince the shallots ahead of time, this dish takes less than 10 minutes to prepare, so it's easy to serve as an appetizer to a big meal. Serves six.

2 Tbs. unsalted butter 1 Tbs. finely minced shallots ³/₄ cup heavy cream Pinch kosher salt 18 oysters, shucked (see method on p. 34)

Heat the oven to 450°F. Heat 1 Tbs. of the butter in a small sauté pan over medium heat. Add the shallots; sauté just until they become transparent, 2 to 3 min. Add the cream, bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer until reduced, about 5 min. Keep warm oververy low heat.

Lay the oysters on the half-shell in a single layer on a baking sheet with edges. Put them in the hot oven just long enough to warm them, about 3 min. Transfer the oysters to a warm platter or individual plates.

Whisk the remaining 1 Tbs. butter into the shallot-cream sauce. Spoon the sauce over the oysters and serve at once.

Pappardelle with Poached Egg & Caviar

You can poach the eggs earlier in the day and keep them in cold water. Just before serving, immerse them in simmering water for about 90 seconds to warm them through without cooking them any further—you want to keep the yolks runny to blend with the butter and cheese to create the delicious sauce. Serve six.

6 large eggs 1 Tbs. kosher salt 10 oz. good-quality dried pappardelle (wide, thin pasta) 4 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened ½ cup freshly grated parmigiano-reggiano



Celery root slices come next, followed by more butter and seasonings. Continue making alternating layers of potato and celery root.

6 tsp. beluga, osetra, or sevruga caviar (don't substitute lumpfish eggs for real caviar; use chopped fresh herbs instead)

Bring a large pot of water (about 6 qt.) to a boil for the pasta. Meanwhile, fill a wide, shallow pan with water and bring to a gentle simmer. Crack each egg into a saucer and gently slide it into the simmering water. Poach the eggs until the whites are firm but the yolks are still runny, 2 to 3 min. Remove each egg with a slotted spoon, drain any water, and set on a warm plate.

When the pasta water is boiling, add the salt and pasta. Stir frequently to keep the pasta from sticking. Use the cooking time on the package as a guide, but start checking 2 min. sooner. When the pasta is al dente (soft but with some resistance left), drain it in a colander, reserving about ½ cup of the cooking water. Return the pasta to the empty pot and toss with 2 Tbs. of the cooking water, the butter, and the grated cheese. If it seems too dry, add a few more spoonfuls of water and toss again.

Divide the pasta among 6 warm serving bowls, top each with a poached egg and the caviar and serve right away.

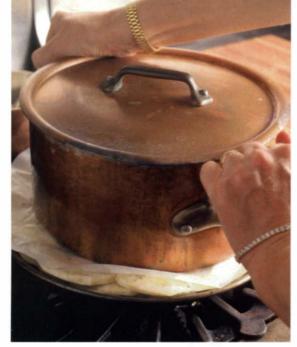
Roast Pork Shoulder with Cranberry-Molasses Glaze

This roast is best when you marinate the pork for about 8 hours, but you'll still get delicious results with only an hour of marinating. Serves six to eight.

1 cup molasses

1/4 cup medium-dry sherry (amontillado)
2 tsp. fennel seeds
11/2 tsp. cayenne
11/2 tsp. salt
7 oz. (about 2 cups) fresh cranberries
8-lb. pork shoulder roast (bone-in)
11/2 lb. onions, thinly sliced
1 Tbs. olive oil

Make the cranberry-molasses glaze by combining the molasses, sherry, fennel seeds, cayenne, 1 tsp. of the salt,



Compact the layers with a heavy weight to keep the Anna intact. Do this once before baking, and again halfway through cooking.

and the cranberries in a food processor. Pulse until the cranberries are chopped into small bits, but not puréed.

Dry the pork roast with paper towels and transfer to a large nonreactive bowl or an extra-large, heavy-duty ziptop plastic bag. Pour over the glaze. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator at least 1 hour or as long as 8 hours, turning the meat three or four times in the glaze.

Heat the oven to 325°F. Toss the sliced onions with the olive oil and spread them in the bottom of a large heavy roasting pan; sprinkle with the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Set the pork on the onions and brush with some of the marinade; reserve the rest. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water to the pan to keep the onions from burning.

Roast the pork in the bottom third of the oven, basting with more marinade every 30 min. Add about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water to the pan if it looks like it's drying out. Roast the pork until it reaches an internal temperature of 140°F, about $\frac{2}{2}$ hours. Reduce the oven temperature to 200° and continue roasting until the pork registers 155°F, about 1 more hour. It will cook a little more as it rests.

Take the roast from the oven, transfer it to a rack set over a tray to catch any drippings, cover loosely with foil, and let rest in a warm place for about 30 min.

Carefully spoon off and discard all the fat from the roasting pan until only the thin pork-and-onion sauce is left. Scrape up any browned bits on the pan's bottom and set the pan aside on low heat until you're ready to serve.

After the pork has rested about 30 min., transfer it to a cutting board and pour any juices into the onion sauce. Slice the pork and set it on a warmed platter. Taste the sauce, add salt and more cayenne if needed, pour it into a gravy boat, and serve with the pork.

Potato & Celery Root Anna

This dish is traditionally made with all potatoes, but we like the extra flavor that celery root adds. Serves six.



6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter 2 celery roots (about 2 lb. total), peeled 1½ lb. red-skinned or other waxy potatoes, peeled ½ tsp. kosher salt Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oven to 450°F. Set the rack in the middle and lay a piece of foil on the oven floor to catch any drips.

Melt the butter and skim off all the foam from the surface. Spoon the yellow clarified butter into a bowl, discarding the remaining milky residue.

Cut the celery root and potatoes into %-inch slices (if the roots are large, cut them in half first).

Heat a 9- or 10-inch cast-iron skillet or paella pan over medium-high heat. Add a few spoonfuls of the butter and, starting from the center, quickly arrange a layer of potato slices in overlapping concentric circles. Drizzle with more butter, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Next, arrange a layer of celery root over the potatoes, moistening with butter and seasoning with salt and pepper. Continue making alternating layers; they'll mound slightly in the center of the pan. Every few seconds, gently shake the pan to be sure the bottom layer of potatoes isn't sticking.

When all the slices have been arranged in the pan, cover it with kitchen parchment, and press with a heavy weight to compress the slices. Remove the weight and parchment, cover the pan with a lid or some foil, and bake for 20 min. Remove the cover, top with parchment again and press the slices. Return to the oven and bake, uncovered, until the celery root and potatoes are tender when pierced with a knife and golden brown, another 20 to 25 min. Carefully tilt the pan to pour off any excess butter. Shake the pan to loosen the first layer so you can turn the dish onto a platter. If it seems to stick, slide a metal spatula underneath. Hold a large plate over the pan and quickly invert it to release the cake. Serve right away.

of potato are the goal when making this dish. To unmold it neatly, first slide a thin spatula between the bottom layer and the pan.

Triple Caramel Cake

You can make the caramel sauce ahead; just reheat it to room temperature before using. Serves ten to twelve.

3 cups heavy cream
2½ cups sugar
6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
4 eggs, at room temperature
2 cups all-purpose flour
1½ tsp. baking powder
Pinch salt

Make the caramel sauce—Pour 2 cups of the cream into a medium saucepan and slowly bring it to a boil. Lower the heat and keep at a bare simmer.

Put 1 cup of the sugar in a heavy-based medium saucepan over medium heat. Leave undisturbed until the sugar



Triple Caramel Cake isn't too rich, just moist and delicious.

begins to melt and darken. Gently shake the pan to distribute the sugar and to keep the melted sugar from burning. When all has melted and the caramel is a very dark amber, remove from the heat. Carefully add the hot cream, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Don't worry if the caramel hardens; it will melt as the sauce boils. Return the pan to the heat and keep the sauce at a

gentle boil for about 5 min., stirring constantly. Set aside for at least 30 min., stirring often, until the sauce is cool. Measure 1 cup of the caramel to add to the cake batter and refrigerate the rest.



Great caramel sauce is made with just sugar and cream.

Make the cake— Heat the oven to 325°F; grease and flour a 12-cup bundt

pan. With an electric mixer, cream the butter and remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of sugar until fluffy. Add the eggs, one by one, waiting until each is incorporated before adding the next. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Gently but thoroughly fold the dry ingredients into the butter and eggs alternately with the reserved cup of caramel, beginning and ending with the dry ingredients.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake until a skewer comes out clean, 35 to 40 min. Set on a rack for about 10 min. and then unmold and cool completely on the rack. Bring the rest of the caramel sauce to room temperature. When the cake is cool, glaze it by drizzling half of the remaining caramel sauce over the top.

Whip the remaining 1 cup of cream until it holds firm peaks. Fold in the last third of the caramel gently, leaving streaks visible. Serve with the cake.

Johanne Killeen and George Germon are the chef/owners of Al Forno restaurant in Providence, Rhode Island.



Wine Choices

For the holidays, uncork some full-flavored treats and celebrate

This menu makes me want to splurge and treat everyone at the table to an extraspecial drink.

Pop some Champagne as soon as your guests walk in the door—to savor before dinner and with the warm oysters in cream. A delicate nonvintage brut, such as a blanc de blancs from Billecart-Salmon or Taittinger, would bring out the best in those briny oysters and their light cream sauce. Though Champagne can get

pricey, you'll often find it on sale, especially if you buy by the case.

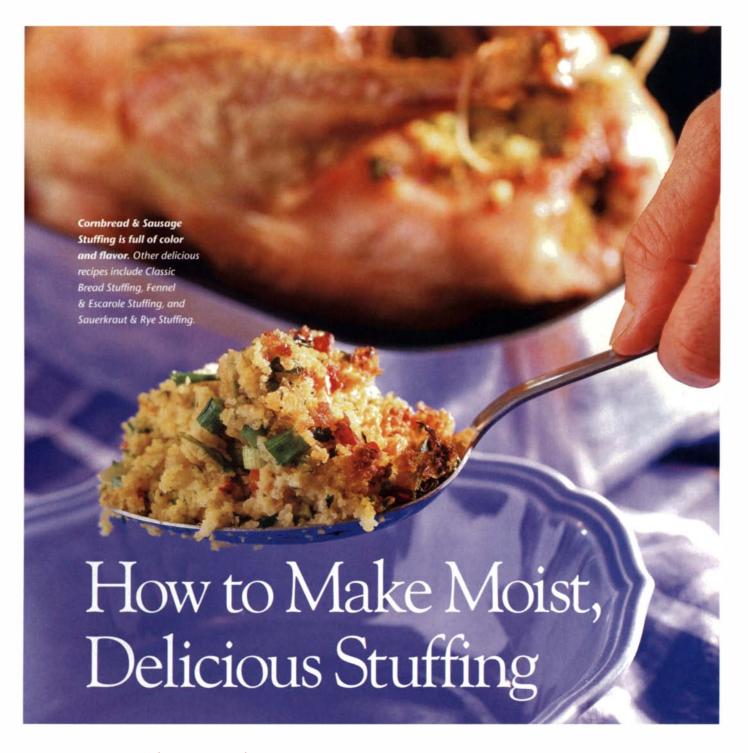
For the pasta, I'd stick with Champagne to partner the rich egg and salty caviar. Switch to a fuller style nonvintage brut, like Roederer or Veuve Cliquot. If you don't like bubbles, a Chenin Blanc would be good with the first two dishes, either Chappelet from California, or a Vouvray from France's Loire Valley.

The pork shoulder wants a full-bodied red. Careful, though:

don't go for one that's supertannic. Both the cayenne in the glaze and the fat in the meat can juke up a wine's tannins. I'd choose a Syrah-based wine that's not too young, with fruit, structure, and spice; either a Rhône red (try a Côte Rôtie from Guigal) or a Gigondas from Jaboulet. A Barbera-based wine from Italy's Piemonte would be good, too (if you can find it, try Braida-Giacomo Bologna). Give these reds at least a half hour breathing

time before you drink them to taste more of their nuances.

With a meal this rich, you may want to opt for a refreshing sparkler for dessert. For a light contrast to the caramel cake, I'd serve a Moscato d'Asti from Italy; Johanne recommends Saracco. Or try a more intensely flavored wine that matches the cake's roasty-sweet flavors—a Hungarian Tokay or a tawny port. Amy Albert is an assistant editor for Fine Cooking.



Here's how to choose the right bread, herbs, spices, and aromatics to make your own family favorite

BY MOLLY STEVENS

y mother liked to experiment when she cooked. She had a notebook filled with all kinds of new recipe ideas that she clipped from magazines and newspapers or copied from friends. But the one thing she never messed with was her delicious stuffing for the holiday turkey.

If, like my mother, you have your favorite stuffing recipe and would face a table of angry family members if you altered it, you may be tempted to skip this article. Don't. For one thing, you'll learn how to improve your stuffing without upsetting family tradition by, say, considering a different kind of bread



Bring out the aromatic flavor of vegetables by sweating them in a little fat. Covering them with foil or a lid as they cook traps moisture and keeps them from browning.



Spread out the bread cubes on a baking sheet. They don't have to be perfectly uniform, but keep the cubes close in size.

base or by tweaking the herbs and spices you add. Or you might be inspired to do what I do on the holidays—make two stuffings, one for the sake of tradition and one to try something deliciously different. More important, there's no law that says you can only stuff a turkey on Thanksgiving and Christmas. You can stuff a turkey (or a chicken, a pork chop, or a pepper, for that matter) any time of year.

THE BREAD YOU USE SETS THE TONE

The job of stuffing is to absorb those delicious juices that are released from the bird during cooking. Though some people make stuffing with grains, I think bread does a better job. My mother used soft, fat loaves of Italian bread in her stuffing, but the possibilities range from everyday white bread to a hearty whole grain, which adds heft and a touch of sweetness. Sourdough makes a slightly tangy and chewy stuffing. Cornbread gives stuffing a light, slightly

nutty flavor. A southern friend of mine combines two parts cornbread with one part buttermilk biscuits to make a light and buttery stuffing. Use the kind of bread that appeals to you, but avoid packaged croutons because they taste, well, packaged.

The way you prepare the bread also affects the character of the stuffing. Most cooks cut it into small—1/4- to 1/2-inch—cubes. (Use smaller cubes when stuffing small birds like chickens and game hens.) Tearing the bread into small pieces gives you a more textured look and feel—an especially good technique for rustic hearth breads.

Avoid soggy stuffing by drying the bread. If the bread isn't dried, it will become sodden, making the



Properly moistened stuffing should just hold together. It will absorb more juices as it cooks inside the turkey.

stuffing mushy. You can dry bread cubes by spreading them out on a baking sheet and leaving them out uncovered overnight or heating them in a low (275°F) oven until they feel dry, about 15 minutes. The exception is cornbread, which needs only to cool completely before being broken into large crumbs.

AROMATIC VEGETABLES ADD FLAVOR

The flavor base for stuffing starts with a *mirepoix* (pronounced meer-PWAH)—an assortment of chopped vegetables and seasonings cooked slowly in butter, oil, or rendered bacon fat. The idea is to soften

the vegetables just enough to release their flavors; you want to leave them, especially the celery, a little crunchy to counter the softness of the bread. Onions and celery are almost always part of this aromatic mix, but consider them a starting point. A bit of garlic is always welcome. Other possibilities include shallots, red and yellow bell peppers, carrots, leeks, and fennel.

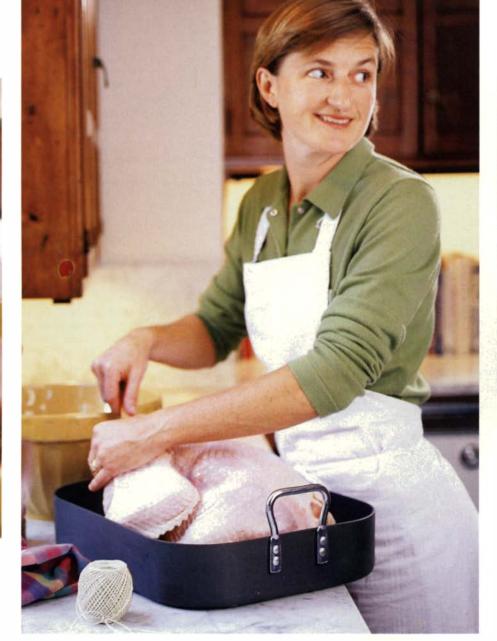
Sage is the classic seasoning used in turkey stuffings. Thyme and parsley are great along with sage. So

40 FINE COOKING

Stuffing isn't just for

the holidays—it's

great any time of year.





Let a little stuffing fall out of the bird for delicious crunchy bits. While the author only stuffs the turkey three-quarters full, she likes to leave a little stuffing exposed to get nice and crunchy. There's no need to truss the turkey; tying the bird's legs with string is all it takes.

"Make more stuffing than you think you need," advises Molly Stevens. "Around our table, everyone always wants plenty."

is rosemary, but use it sparingly so its strong, resinous flavor doesn't overpower. Spices like ground cloves, allspice, nutmeg, or mace give stuffing depth, adding a touch of sweetness and warmth. Use just a tiny pinch, however: the spice flavors shouldn't stand out.

A LITTLE LIQUID HOLDS IT ALL TOGETHER

A stuffing destined for inside the bird should have just enough moisture to barely cling together when mounded on a spoon. If it's too wet, it can't soak up the juices from the bird. A stuffing baked in a casserole dish needs a cup or two of stock poured over it to keep it moist during baking.

There are many ways to add moisture before the stuffing goes into the bird. For my Basic Bread Stuffing (p. 42), I cover the vegetables as they cook to trap all their moisture and flavor. Then I add a generous dose of melted butter, and a bit of stock, white wine, or milk. In other stuffings, I rely on the moisture from added fruits or other moist additions, such as the

Don't overstuff the bird—and other tips for safe stuffing

Because an improperly stuffed or undercooked turkey can cause illness, follow these guidelines for safe stuffing:

- ◆ Stuff the bird just before roasting. You can make the stuffing in advance and refrigerate it for up to two days, but bring it to room temperature before stuffing the turkey because a cold stuffing will slow down the cooking. If you like to add egg to your stuffing, don't add it until just before stuffing the turkey.
- ◆ Pack the stuffing loosely. The stuffing expands as it absorbs juices, and if it's too tightly packed, it won't cook through. I generally leave enough room to fit my whole extended hand into the bird's cavity. Any extra stuffing gets cooked alongside the bird in a casserole dish.
- ◆ Cook the stuffing in the bird to 160° to 165°F. Check it with an instant-read thermometer inserted all the way into the center of the stuffing. If the bird is done before the stuffing is, take the bird out of the oven but spoon the stuffing into a casserole dish and continue to bake it while the turkey rests before carving.

sauerkraut or cooked escarole featured in the recipes that follow. Some cooks add an egg or two to their stuffing as a binder. Once again, cornbread breaks the rules—it's moist and tender enough on its own so there's no need to add a lot of extra liquid.

CREATE YOUR OWN STUFFING

One fun thing about stuffing is that there are so many ways to play with flavors and additions. But before you start altering your stuffing recipe, get an idea of the overall flavor you're after and then select ingredients to get you there. For example, if you like southwestern flavors, you might add some smoky chiles and earthy cumin seed to a cornbread-based stuffing. Or for a sweet fruit dressing, try wheat bread, apples, dried cherries, and parsley. Some quick, flavorful additions include cooked chopped turkey giblets, some bacon or ham, lightly cooked oysters, chopped cooked spinach, sautéed wild mushrooms, toasted nuts, raisins, currants, or dried apricots.

A big holiday turkey is the first thing most of us think of when it comes to stuffing, but I like to stuff chicken and little game hens any time of the year. A thick pork chop can also hold a little stuffing, as can a butterflied leg of lamb or pork roast.

As for the amount of stuffing you'll need, estimate 3/4 to 1 cup stuffing per person. I always err on the side of too much rather than too little. After all, leftover stuffing is great on a turkey sandwich.



The earthy, assertive flavors of Sauerkraut & Rye Bread Stuffing make it perfect for the maverick holiday host. Others may want to serve it with chicken, as shown here, for a comforting winter meal.

Classic Bread Stuffing

For a less rich stuffing, omit the last 4 tablespoons of melted butter and add a bit more stock. *Yields 12 to 14 cups*.

8 Tbs. butter
3 cups chopped onion
2½ cups chopped celery, including leaves
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1½ Tbs. chopped fresh sage or 1½ tsp. dried
1½ Tbs. chopped fresh thyme or 1½ tsp. dried
2 tsp. celery seeds
Pinch grated nutmeg
Pinch ground cloves
1 tsp. salt
1-lb. loaf good-quality white bread, cut into ½-inch cubes

1-Ib. loaf good-quality white bread, cut into ½-inch cube:
(10 to 12 cups), stale or lightly toasted
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
½ cup stock, milk, or white wine

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt half the butter. Add the onion, celery, garlic, sage, thyme, celery seeds, nutmeg, cloves, and salt. Cook, covered, until the onion is soft, 5 to 7 min. Remove from the heat. In a large bowl, toss the sautéed vegetables with the bread cubes. Season with pepper. Melt the remaining butter. Pour it over the stuffing, along with the stock, and toss to coat. The stuffing should just hold together when mounded on a spoon.

Stuff the bird following the tips in the box on p. 41. If baking some or all of the stuffing in a casserole, pour a cup or two of stock over the stuffing to replace the juices the stuffing would have absorbed from the bird. Bake it covered until heated through, 45 min. to 1 hour. For a crunchy top, uncover it for the last 15 min. of baking.

Sauerkraut & Rye Bread Stuffing

At my first Thanksgiving with my husband's Baltimore family, I was surprised to see a big bowl of sauerkraut next to the turkey. I later learned that sauerkraut is a mid-Atlantic holiday tradition. This stuffing embraces it enthusiastically. *Note*—Plastic bags of fresh sauerkraut are sold in the refrigerated or deli section in most supermarkets. It must be rinsed before using. *Yields 12 to 14 cups*.

½ Ib. bacon, preferably thick cut, country-style, cut into ½-inch pieces
 2 cups chopped onion
 ½ cups chopped celery, including leaves
 ½ cups chopped carrots
 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp. dried
 1 tsp. caraway seeds, lightly crushed
 1 tsp. celery seeds
 2 tsp. salt
 ½ cup dry white wine or beer
 2 cups chopped tart apples
 8 cups stale or lightly toasted ½-inch rye bread cubes
 1 lb. fresh sauerkraut (see note above), rinsed and drained

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large skillet, fry the bacon over medium-high heat until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Pour off all but 4 Tbs. of the bacon grease and set the pan over moderate heat. Add the onion, celery, carrots, thyme, caraway seeds, celery seeds, and salt. Cook until the vegetables begin to soften, about 10 min. Add the wine and bring to a boil, scraping the pan to loosen and dissolve the browned bits. Add the apples, cover, and cook until the apples are tender. Remove from the heat and combine in a large bowl with the bread cubes and sauerkraut. Season with pepper; toss to combine. Bake in the bird or in a casserole as directed in the Classic Bread Stuffing recipe, above.

Fennel & Escarole Stuffing with Pine Nuts

This stuffing is great in a casserole topped with a little Parmesan cheese. *Yields 10 to 12 cups.*

4 Tbs. olive oil

 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped onion

4 cups chopped fresh fennel

2 Tbs. finely chopped garlic

1 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary or 1 tsp. dried

1 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp. dried

1 tsp. fennel seeds, lightly crushed

1 tsp. salt

1 medium head escarole, washed thoroughly and cut into 1-inch pieces (about 6 cups)

½ cup dry white wine

8 cups stale or lightly toasted ½-inch bread cubes, preferably from a chewy sourdough loaf

1/2 cup pine nuts, lightly toasted

2 tsp. grated lemon zest

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the onion, fennel, garlic, rosemary, thyme, fennel seeds, and salt. Cook, covered, until the onion is soft and translucent, 5 to 7 min. Add the escarole, cover, and cook until the escarole is wilted. Add the wine and let it simmer until some of the liquid has evaporated, 2 or 3 min. In a large bowl, combine the vegetables with the bread cubes, pine nuts, and lemon zest. Season with pepper; toss to combine. The stuffing should just hold together when mounded on a spoon. Bake in the bird or in a casserole as directed in the Classic Bread Stuffing recipe, left.

Cornbread & Sausage Stuffing

For a stuffing with a bit of heat, use hot Italian sausage or even chorizo. *Yields 12 to 14 cups*.

3/4 lb. sweet Italian sausage (without casings), cut in small chunks

3 to 4 Tbs. rendered bacon fat or butter, if needed 2 cups chopped onion

 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups finely chopped celery, including leaves

1½ cups finely chopped bell pepper, preferably a mix of red and green

2 Tbs. finely chopped garlic



You don't need a turkey to make stuffing: this Fennel & Escarole Stuffing tastes great as a casserole—try it topped with some Parmesan. If baking stuffing in a pan, add one or two cups of stock to the dish since there aren't any juices from the bird.



1 Tbs. chopped fresh thyme or 1 tsp. dried Pinch dried chile flakes (optional)
1 tsp. salt
1 recipe Basic Cornbread (see below), crumbled
1 cup chopped scallion
1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/4 cup snipped fresh chives
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

In a large skillet, cook the sausage over medium heat until browned. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add enough rendered bacon fat or butter to the pan to get about 5 Tbs. total fat. Add the onion, celery, peppers, garlic, thyme, chile flakes, and salt. Cook briefly until the onion is softened. With a wooden spoon, scrape up any browned bits in the pan. Combine in a large bowl with the crumbled cornbread, scallions, parsley, chives, and pepper. Toss to combine. Bake in the bird or in a casserole as directed in the Classic Bread Stuffing recipe, opposite.

Turkey is supposed to be the star of the holiday table, but a great stuffing can steal the show. The author always makes more than she needs so she can have leftover stuffing for sandwiches.

Basic Cornbread Recipe

This recipe makes a great not-too-sweet bread with a dry texture that's perfect for stuffing. *Yields 8 cups crumbled cornbread*.

1 cup yellow cornmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. baking powder
11/2 tsp. salt
3/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 egg, lightly beaten
11/2 cups buttermilk
2 Tbs. butter or rendered bacon fat

Heat the oven to 350°F. Sift together the cornmeal, flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, and pepper. Combine the egg and buttermilk, add them to the dry ingredients, and stir to combine. Heat the butter in a 10-inch oven-proof skillet over moderate heat until bubbly. Tilt to coat the pan; pour in the batter. Cook the bread on the stove for about 3 min. to give it a good crust. Put the skillet in the oven to bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the bread comes out clean, 20 to 25 min. Turn the cornbread out on a rack so it doesn't get soggy as it cools.

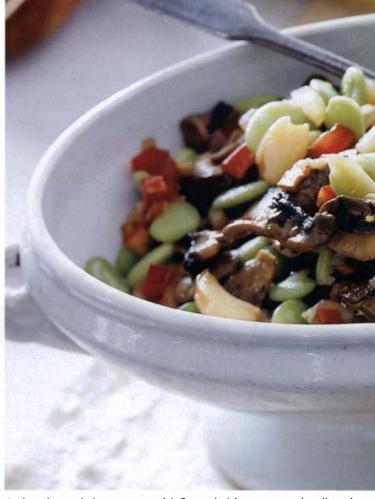
Molly Stevens, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, makes stuffing year-round in Vermont. ◆



Creamed collards are meltingly tender and full of flavor. If you can't find Smithfield ham to add to the greens, try prosciutto—it may not be southern, but it's delicious.



Instead of plain baked potatoes, try a baked sweet potato pudding. Flavored with a hint of maple, cinnamon, and nutmeg, this make-ahead grits dish fits in perfectly at the holiday table.

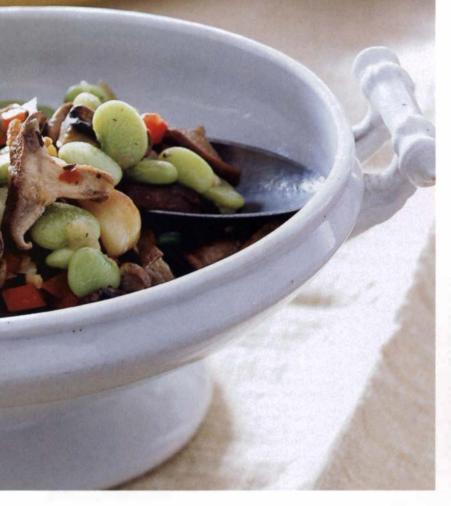


A wintertime variation on succotash is flavored with sweet roasted garlic and piny rosemary. Use a mix of cultivated and wild mushrooms for the best flavor.

Easy Southern Make Holiday

A top Charleston chef shares his recipes for five favorite vegetable dishes that taste even better when cooked ahead

BY ROBERT CARTER





A delicious custard surrounds roasted butternut squash and caramelized onions—a great dish to take to pot lucks.

Vegetables Meals Festive

love to plan holiday menus, which is a good thing since my restaurant is open on Thanksgiving and Christmas. The kind of menu that works for me includes a bunch of side dishes to go along with the main event; the variety and abundance makes the menu festive. I look for vegetable dishes that taste great even if they have to sit a bit. After all, with so much food on the table, not everything gets eaten right out of the oven.

I generally stick to southern favorites—collards, sweet potatoes, onions, lima beans—but I give them an updated feel and flavor that nevertheless makes my guests feel right at home.



Toasted pecans and brown butter turn green beans into an irresistible side dish. The author also gives Brussels sprouts this simple but delicious treatment.

SOUTHERN-STYLE DOESN'T MEAN COOKED TO DEATH

I do know southerners who like their vegetables pale and limp, but most prefer vegetables that are cooked just until tender, and then maybe just a minute more. Cooking them until just tender means they'll wait patiently on the table without becoming mushy.

Other stereotypes of southern-style vegetables that they're heavy on butter and cream—well, I'm guilty of a little of that, especially around the holidays, when food should be extravagant, calories be damned. But by using more concentrated flavors and

Cooking the vegetables until just tender gives them staying power on the table.

cutting the vegetables to speed cooking times, I've created dishes that aren't quite so over the top.

Instead of using brown sugar to enhance my sweet potatoes, for example, I add a touch of maple syrup to a sweet potato purée that's then mixed with grits and baked. You get a delicately flavored spoonbread-like dish that's easy to make ahead. And to avoid cooking my collards to death to make them tender, I shred them like coleslaw so that their fibers break down and cook faster. This method gives you a long-cooked flavor without the long cooking.

MAKE SOME DISHES AHEAD FOR LESS WORK ON THE BIG DAY

The butternut casserole and the sweet potato pud-



Caramelized onions add a deep, sweet flavor to a butternut squash casserole. Cook the onions until they're soft and brown.

ding can both be made a day ahead and refrigerated. They taste even better when reheated since the flavors have had a chance to blend and mellow.

As for those dishes that are cooked along with the rest of the meal, if you have all the ingredients prepared before you start to cook—collards cut, nuts toasted. beans blanched, mushrooms sliced—they won't take long at all to make.

Creamy Collards with Smithfield Ham

Southern lore says to eat collards (and blackeyed peas) on New Year's Day to bring good luck. This creamy rendition makes superstition delicious. Serves eight to ten.

1/4 cup olive oil

1 cup finely chopped onion

1 Tbs. finely chopped garlic

1½ cups chopped Smithfield ham, other country-cured ham, or prosciutto

2 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock 2 large bunches (about 3 lb. total) collard greens, washed,

stemmed, and cut into 1/4-inch strips

2 cups heavy cream Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the olive oil in a very large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic; sauté until translucent, about 5 min. Add the ham; sauté for about 1 min. Add the stock and collards; cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the collards are tender, about 15 min. (The greens will diminish in volume as they cook.) Add the cream and cook until it reduces and thickens slightly, another 15 min. Season with salt and pepper.

Roasted Butternut Squash & **Caramelized Onion Casserole**

Roasting the squash gives it a deep, sweet flavor and makes its thick skin easier to peel. Serves ten to twelve.

2½ lb. butternut squash 1/4 cup olive oil; more for coating the squash 4 cups sliced onion 2 tsp. finely chopped garlic 3 eggs 3 egg yolks 1½ cups heavy cream 1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme

1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the oven to 400°F. Rub the squash with olive oil, prick them with a knife in a few places, put them on a baking sheet, and roast until just tender when pierced with a knife, about 45 min. Let cool completely. Peel the squash, remove the seeds, and cut the flesh into slices 1/4 inch thick. Set aside.

Meanwhile, in a large sauté pan, heat ¼ cup olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions; sauté, stirring occasionally, until they soften, about 5 min. Turn the heat to low; cook until the onions caramelize to a golden brown, about 20 min. Add the garlic; cook 1 min. Put the onions in a colander in the sink to drain off the oil. Set aside.



Shredded collards cook quickly and tenderly. Use a large chef's knife to cut the leaves into ½-inch strips.

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9x1 3-inch casserole. In a large bowl, toss the caramelized onions and squash slices together; spread them out in the casserole.

In a medium bowl, mix together the eggs, egg yolks, cream, thyme, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Pour this over the squash and onions and mix well to distribute the custard mixture evenly. Cover the dish loosely with foil. Bake until the custard is set and a knife inserted comes out clean, about 55 min.

Green Beans with Brown Butter & Pecans

I also give Brussels sprouts this toasty, buttery treatment; I just cook them longer for a tender bite. Serves eight to ten.

2 lb. green beans, trimmed
8 Tbs. butter, cut into pieces
¼ cup finely chopped shallots
½ cup chopped toasted pecans
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice; more to taste
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the green beans; cook until tender, about 5 min. Plunge them into ice water to stop the cooking. Drain and reserve.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the shallots and pecans; cook, stirring, until the butter turns a light brown and begins to smell nutty; be careful not to burn it. Add the beans and toss to coat. Cook until the beans are warmed through, about 3 min. Add the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper.

Mushroom & Roasted Garlic "Succotash"

This wintertime version features mushrooms. You can use all button mushrooms or a mix, including shiitake, cremini, and your favorite wild mushrooms. Serves ten.

1 head garlic 1 Tbs. olive oil 2 slices bacon, chopped 1½ cups chopped onion 1 Tbs. finely chopped garlic 6 cups sliced mushrooms (about 1 lb.)
1 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
½ cup finely chopped red bell pepper
3 cups (about 13 oz.) frozen lima beans, thawed
2 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the oven to 400°F. Cut off the top third of the head of garlic to expose the cloves. Coat the cut side with the olive oil. Wrap the garlic loosely in foil, put it on a baking sheet, and roast until very soft, about 1 hour. When cool enough to handle, squeeze out the soft garlic; set aside.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the bacon until crisp. Add the onion and chopped garlic and sauté until softened, about 2 min. Add the mushrooms and sauté until softened and lightly browned. Add the stock, roasted garlic, red pepper, and lima beans; cook until the beans are tender and the liquid is reduced, about 10 min. Add the rosemary; season with salt and pepper.

Sweet Potato & Grits "Spoon Bread"

Technically, spoon bread is made with cornmeal, but I prefer the texture of this pudding-like dish when made with coarse, country-style grits. Instant grits and even polenta will also give the dish good

corn flavor and a wonderful texture. If using one of these substitutions, follow the package directions for cooking times. Serves twelve.

FOR THE SWEET POTATOES:

2 lb. sweet potatoes, peeled, cut in 1-inch chunks 2½ tsp. salt

½ tsp. freshly ground white pepper

1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg

¼ tsp. ground cinnamon

½ cup maple syrup

3 eggs, separated

FOR THE GRITS:

3 cups water ½ tsp. chopped garlic 2 Tbs. butter

½ tsp. salt

Pinch cayenne (optional)

11/4 cups stone-ground grits

2 Tbs. heavy cream

Put the sweet potatoes in a large pot; cover with water and $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. of the salt. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer until the potatoes are fork-tender, about 10 min. Drain and purée the potatoes in a food mill or ricer. Fold in the remaining 1 tsp. salt, the white pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, and maple syrup. Set aside.

While the potatoes boil, cook the grits. In a medium heavy-based pot, bring the water and garlic to a boil. Add the butter, salt, and cayenne. Gradually whisk in the grits. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the grits are cooked and creamy and just start to pull away from the side of the pot, about 30 min. Remove from the heat and fold in the cream.

Heat the oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, mix the sweet potato purée with the grits. Mix in the egg yolks. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until they form soft peaks; gently fold them into the sweet potatoes. Spread the mixture in a 9x1 3-inch casserole and bake until pudding sets and the top is lightly browned, about 35 min.

Robert Carter is the chef at the Peninsula Grill at the Planter's Inn in Charleston, South Carolina. ◆



Cook the grits until they're creamy and just begin to come away from the sides of the pot. You should still be able to see individual grains in the grits.

horos: Karl Perzke

Slow-Grilled Turkey is Smoky-Sweet and Juicy



Thanksgiving in California is a short-sleeve affair. Use a 22-inch kettle grill to cook a small (12- to 14-pound) turkey.

first encountered grilled turkey as a child on my grandparents' ranch in Colorado. Even during the cold winter months, we'd take a turkey, split it down the back, and lay it butterfly-style on the grill, mopping it regularly with all kinds of flavorful stuff while it slowly cooked.

These days, I love cooking whole turkey on the grill, any time of the year. In fact, it's a staple at my restaurant. And around holiday time, cooking a turkey on the grill is a really fun alternative to roasting it. But once you start cooking, be careful—the smoky-sweet smell of the slowly cooking bird will have neighbors from blocks around stopping by for a visit.

A maple and ginger infused brine and long, slow cooking over smoky coals yield a moist turkey that's a delicious alternative to roasting

TEXT BY JOHN ASH;
RECIPE BY JOHN ASH & JEFF MADURA

THE SMOKE-GRILLING METHOD IS EASY TO LEARN

It's easy to master delicious grilled turkey.

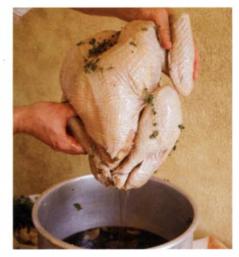
Brine the bird. To add flavor, texture, and moisture, we recommend brining the turkey first. This is also a wonderful technique for any other bird,

such as duck or chicken. Here we call for brining the turkey for two to four days, but even a few hours in the brine can make a huge difference. Traditional brines are made from a combination of salt, sugar, and water, with some whole spices added for a little flavor. We've taken the brine a step further with other flavoring ingredients: chile flakes, bay leaves, brown sugar, maple syrup, fresh ginger, and soy sauce. These ingredients have assertive flavors, but the results are deliciously subtle.

You'll need a stockpot that will hold a 12- to 14-pound turkey (12 quarts should do), and a clear spot in your fridge (or in the garage if you live in Minnesota and it's November) to hold the pot.

Set up a covered grill. A 22-inch kettle-style charcoal grill is ideal for grilling with indirect heat, but any covered, charcoal-fueled grill big enough to hold the turkey (and still get the lid on) will work.

Add smoky flavor with aromatic hardwood chips or chunks. You can use good-quality briquettes or hardwood charcoal to fuel your fire; then choose aromatic hardwood chips or chunks for your smoking medium. Our favorites include apple, pear, cherry, walnut, and



Brine the turkey for fabulous flavor and texture. Keep the bird weighted down in the brine with a few heavy plates, and turn the turkey over in the brine once or twice a day. Let the brine drain from the cavity before flipping the bird over.

48



The maple syrup, brown sugar, and soy sauce in the brine give the turkey a deep brown, almost lacquered look. The color changes from cherry to mahogany as the turkey cooks. Start the brine at least two days ahead.

pecan, and here in the wine country, we often use grapevine cuttings with wonderful results. We hold the wood chips in aluminum foil or some other container so that we can take them out of the fire once the turkey has enough smoky flavor.

Learn the indirect-heat method of grilling. Our recipe for cooking the turkey is very specific about how the fire should be arranged and maintained. This is crucial, because you don't want to cook the turkey over direct heat—the outside



Set up the grill for indirect heat. Arrange charcoal on either side of a large foil-coated drip pan, which will allow heat to circulate around the bird.

will be overdone before the inside is cooked. Also, if your grill doesn't come equipped with a thermometer, put an oven thermometer on the rack inside the grill to give you an idea of how hot your "outdoor oven" is getting. You'll also need a meat thermometer to check the temperature of the turkey.

Maple-Brined, Wood-Smoked Grilled Turkey

Allow a total of 4 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours to start the fire, cook the turkey, and let it rest. Have a full bag



Keep the smoking chips in a foil pouch or even a small cast-iron pan. This way, you can easily remove them to control how much smoke flavor the turkey picks up.

of charcoal on hand, as you'll need to add coals as the bird cooks. Serves eight to twelve.

FOR THE BRINE:

2 cups brown sugar

1 cup maple syrup

3/4 cup coarse salt

3 whole heads garlic, cloves separated (but not peeled) and bruised

6 large bay leaves

1½ cups coarsely chopped unpeeled fresh ginger

2 tsp. dried chile flakes

1½ cups soy sauce

3 qt. water

Handful fresh thyme sprigs

FOR THE TURKEY: Olive oil for brushing

12- to 14-lb. fresh turkey

To brine the turkey—Combine all the brine ingredients in an enamel or stainless-steel pot big enough to hold the brine and turkey.

pot big enough to hold the brine and turkey. Bring to a simmer, remove from the heat, and let cool completely. Remove the neck and giblets, rinse the turkey well, and put it in the cold brine; add water if the brine doesn't cover the bird. Refrigerate for 2 to 4 days, turning the bird twice a day.

To cook the turkey—Remove the bird from the brine, pat it dry, lightly brush it with olive oil, and set aside. Prepare the grill by lighting about 30 charcoal briquettes or small pieces of hardwood charcoal, preferably in a chimney starter. When the coals are hot and spotted gray, put an aluminum-foil drip pan that's at least 1 inch deep in the middle of the grill. Arrange half the coals on one side of the pan and half on the other. Put ½ cup or so of wood chips in a double layer of aluminum foil and set them on the hot coals.

Put the upper rack of the grill in place and center the turkey, breast side up, on the rack over the drip pan. Cover the grill and partially close the air vents. Regulate the vents to keep the wood chips smoking and the coals burning slowly, checking every 25 min. or so. Add charcoal periodically. Keep the temperature in the grill between 275° and 325°F.

Add more wood chips as you need them. Keep the smoke going for $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours; then remove the chips and continue cooking without smoke until the bird is done. The total cooking time for a 12- to 14-lb. bird is about 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Test the turkey with an instant-read thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh or breast. You can also cut a small incision at the leg-thigh joint to see that the juices run clear. When the internal temperature reaches 155° F, remove the turkey from the grill. Let it rest at least 20 min. before carving.

John Ash is the culinary director of Fetzer Vineyards in Hopland, California. Jeff Madura is chef de cuisine at John Ash & Company in Santa Rosa, California. ◆



Choosing Great Knives for Confident, Skillful Cooking

A trio of top-quality knives—chef's, paring, and serrated—lets you chop, peel, and slice like a pro

BY AMY ALBERT

ne of my favorite games is Desert Island, where someone picks a category—books, CDs, wines—and you name the one you'd pack if you were banished to a desert island. I get to spend time in the kitchen with a lot of great cooks as part of my job, and at some point, I usually ask what their Desert Island kitchen tools are. You'd think the answer might vary depending on the cook, but the response is always the same: "My knives."

Unlike writers, musicians, or people in the wine trade, though, who gather collections equal in size to their passion, the chefs I know don't usually have a million knives. They keep using the same few trusty tools. Here's why.



A long serrated knife is perfect for slicing cake layers and for soft, fleshy fruits. Look for a thin blade with some stiffness to help you make even cuts safely.

WITH JUST THREE KNIVES, YOU'RE EQUIPPED LIKE A PRO

A few top-quality knives that you love using will serve you better than a wide variety of different ones.

A chef's knife can have a blade from 6 to 12 inches long. The blade depth varies, but it's at least 1½ inches at the widest point. Use this knife to chop, mince, and slice; use the side of the blade to crush garlic cloves, peppercorns, and ginger slices.

A chef's knife can feel intimidating, but don't be afraid of it. Learn to use one, even if it's just a 6-incher, and you'll soon gain speed, control, and confidence. The longer blade may take a little getting used to, but it's worth it because a chef's knife is extremely efficient for slicing and chopping. Grabbing a small knife for every task limits you, and you'll get tired faster, especially when you're chopping large amounts.

A paring knife has a 3- to 4- inch-long blade that's about ³/₄ inch deep at the widest point. It's used to pare and peel vegetables and for countless small-scale tasks such as trimming chicken breasts, scoring thin cuts of meat, and making cuts in pastry dough.



A paring knife is essential for peeling, and for loads of other small-scale kitchen tasks.

A long serrated knife is ideal for bagels and crusty bread, but a good one will perform many tasks well. "I love a serrated knife for tomatoes, peaches, and other foods with soft, easily bruised skins," says Molly Stevens, a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*. Stevens marvels at how her serrated knife keeps its edge despite heavy usage: that's because the curvy parts of the blade aren't drawn repeatedly across the cutting board as a straight-edged blade is.

ALL GOOD KNIVES SHARE COMMON TRAITS

Visit a store with a good selection of knives and compare several different brands of the same size knife. Here's what to look for.

The knife must feel comfortable. See which feels the most like a natural extension of your hand.

- ♦ Grab hold. Can you get a good grip? Do your hand and forearm stay relaxed? There should be a fairly equal balance between blade and handle, but don't let sales talk about "balance point" confuse you. Some knives are slightly handle-heavy, some are blade-heavy, and some do feel even between the two. Some also weigh more than others. The knife that feels good in your hand is the right one for you.
- ◆ Pantomime slicing and chopping. Does the knife feel manageable or unwieldy? If your hands are small, a 10-inch chef's knife may feel too big for you; you might be better off with an 8-inch size.

The knife should be fully forged, rather than stamped. A fully forged knife is a single piece of

A knife looks simple, but every part has a purpose

Here's an anatomy lesson using a chef's knife as the model, although most of the features described apply to all knives.



The tang (the tail of the blade) extends into the handle and should run its entire length, or almost, for good balance and to ensure that the blade won't break off.

The rivets or binding posts secure the handle to the blade. If they're visible, they should be completely flush with the handle's surface so that bits of food can't get trapped.



The spine, tapered thicker than the blade, adds heft. Use this side of the knife to push chopped items around a cutting board.

The bolster gives the blade weight and keeps your fingers from slipping onto the blade. One that extends all the way down will protect you best.

The heel is great for hacking and chopping small bones.

The handle should be sturdy and easy to grip, with a fairly equal balance between it and the blade. Water-resistant handles are best. Wood looks great, but if it isn't well-sealed, it will need oiling.

metal beaten and ground into shape in several stages involving high heat and tons of pressure, while stamped knives are cut out of sheet metal. Most good-quality chef's and paring knives are forged. They're more expensive, but they're worth the price. Forged knives are stronger tools because forged metal is worked more than stamped is; this means the metal is finer-grained and sturdier. And a knife forged from one piece of metal has no soldered-on parts.

The blade should be made of high-carbon stainless steel. Most good-quality knives these days are made from this alloy. It combines the best of carbon steel (which sharpens easily) and stainless steel (which keeps an edge longer, doesn't stain, and doesn't discolor foods).

EXPAND YOUR COLLECTION WITH FAVORITES FROM THE PROS

There are a few other knives that many cooks wouldn't be without.

Abby Dodge, Fine Cooking's recipe tester, likes a utility or sandwich knife with a 6-inch blade that's

can quickly dice an onion and easily serve a piece of cake," she says. "I've relied on that knife for 18 years—it's the one I always grab first."

Deborah Madison, a cookbook writer in Santa Fe, agrees. She has a Japanese model with a ceramic blade. "It's not for chopping 15 onions, but I like that knife for any kind of fine work, like paper-thin pear slices or a beautifully peeled potato," she explains.

Jimmy Sneed, chef/owner of The Frog & the Redneck in Richmond, Virginia, loves his ceramic knife, too. "It's lightweight and cuts with abandon," he says. You should never touch the brittle, delicate blade to a steel, so Sneed "doesn't let it near the restaurant." While ceramic knives may feel lighter than metal ones, the price is heftier (see chart, right).

Josh Eisen, a cook and food writer, counts a shorter (6-inch) chef's knife among his must-haves. "There's less to wash, and less to wield, especially if I'm

French vs. German chef's knives



French-style chef's knives have a shallower, sleeker blade that allows higher clearance when slicing big items.



German-style chef's knives have a deeper blade that's great for back-and-forth "rock" chopping.

Catherine Brandel, a chef/instructor at the Culinary Institute of America's Napa Valley campus, favors a 6-inch chef's knife, too. "You don't want to do a whole lot of parsley with it," she says, "but this knife feels good in my hand. Sometimes I even find myself starting to use it for things I really shouldn't, like boning—it's so comfortable that I just tend to grab it." Su-Mei Yu, a Thai cook, food historian,

and owner of Saffron in San Diego, says, "It's my Asian training, but I still only use two knives." Her trusty duo: a small paring knife for fine work, and a cleaver for chopping

large quantities, for cutting meat and fish, and pounding.

Several chefs say a boning knife is indispensable if you do a lot of butchering. Paul Bertolli, chef/owner of Oliveto in Oakland, California, says a boning knife's semiflexible blade is responsive enough to follow the form of meat, and the blade's curve makes it easy to perform the swiping cuts butchering requires. Jim Peterson, another *Fine Cooking* contributing editor, finds a boning knife comfortable because the handle is almost as big as a chef's knife; you get a good grip, yet the blade is small enough to maneuver around bone, fat, and tissue.

Knives make great gifts but ask for a penny for luck

My first good knife was from my mother, and there was a penny in the box, a reminder that I actually had to buy it from her. "You never *give* a knife," she insisted. "It's bad luck."

Was this culinary tradition, or just my superstitious mom? I asked around. Lidia Bastianich, chef/owner of Felidia, an Italian restaurant in New York City, had lots to say. "People are more open-minded here, but in Italy we *never* gave a knife as a wedding present," says Bastianich, who explained that a knife signifies an argument. "If you borrow it, you must give it back, or else it's a bad omen on your house. And never, *ever* greet anyone while you're holding a knife."

I asked Jean-Louis
Gerin, chef/owner of
Restaurant Jean-Louis in
Greenwich, Connecticut, if
the French are superstitious
about knives. Yes, he said, but
quickly assured me that there's
a way around it. "If someone
gives you a knife, just give back
a penny," he said.

For an Eastem perspective, I called Su-Mei Yu, a Thai chef and owner of Saffron restaurant in San Diego, about giving back a penny. "Oh, no. We'd want the full sum," she replied. "We'd never offer a cutting implement as a gift," said Yu, alarmed at the idea. "It's like giving a weapon."

Sources

A Cook's Wares—800/915-9788 Knife Merchant—800/714-8226 Professional Cutlery Direct—800/859-6994

Amy Albert is an assistant editor for Fine Cooking. ◆

Compare knives to help you make the right choice

Brand	Comments	8-inch chef's	10-inch chef's	3½-inch paring	9-inch serrated	6-inch utility	For information
forged steel							
Wüsthof Classic	polypropylene handle molded onto tang; deep blade	\$98	\$ 115	\$43	\$86	\$ 68	800/289-9878
Henckels Four-Star	polypropylene handle molded onto tang; deep blade	\$101	\$ 120	\$45 (4-inch)	\$75 (8-inch)	\$ 68	914/747-0300 x343
LamsonSharp Gold Forged	polymer handle; deep blade	\$ 90	\$105	\$42	\$74	\$ 66	800/872-6564 www.lamsonsharp.com
Chef's Choice by Edge Craft	polymer handle molded onto tang; tapered bolster stops short of blade	\$110	available soon	\$46	\$80	\$75	800/342-3255
Cuisine de France Sabatier Commercial	molded polymer handle; shallower blade	\$98	\$108	\$40	\$78	\$ 66	203/335-5930
Global	steel handle soldered to forged blade; angled blade; lighter feel	\$70	\$110	\$37 (4-inch)	\$64	\$44 (5-inch)	800/859-6994 (Professional Cutlery Direct)
Chicago Cutlery	long, sealed wood handle; very deep blade	\$ 78	\$92	\$34	\$58 (8-inch)	\$ 54	800/545-4411
ceramic							
Kyocera	sealed wood handle; delicate blade; send to company for sharpening			\$80 (3-inch)		\$225	800/537-0294 www.kyocera.com/ kai/consumer

Prices are suggested retail; you'll often find discounts. Besides retailers, you'll find a big selection of knives in catalogs, where prices are often below list.

Putting the Buttery Crunch in Peanut Brittle

Raw nuts, butter, and baking soda are secrets to richly flavored, delicate brittle

BY FLO BRAKER

andy is a frivolous thing with no other purpose than to delight, and that's why it's so wonderful. But for many home cooks, candymaking is becoming a lost art. They think of candy as complicated and technically difficult, but the truth is that a lot of candies are quite simple to make. When the holidays come around, along with the usual assortment of cookies, I like to give homemade candy, and peanut brittle is one of the quickest, easiest candies to make. With just a few ingredients, most of which I have on

hand, I can make wonderful homemade peanut brittle in less than an hour and a half from start to delicious finish.

BAKING SODA AND BUTTER MAKE A MORE DELICATE BRITTLE

Sugar syrup is the foundation of candymaking. To make peanut brittle, the sugar syrup must be cooked to what is



Baking soda adds bubbles—millions of minuscule ones that make the brittle more porous. Take the syrup off the heat before adding the baking soda so it doesn't foam out of the pan.

called the hard-crack stage. That means that the syrup solidifies when cooled, breaks easily when snapped, and no longer feels sticky. At this stage, the syrup will register between 305° and 310°F on a candy thermometer.

The trick, though, is to make a candy that's truly brittle so that it breaks when you bite it, rather than a hard candy that must be sucked like a lollipop or toffee. By adding baking soda to the sugar syrup, you unleash a zillion minuscule air bubbles that give the candy a porous, delicate texture. Butter also helps to make the candy tender and easier to chew, as well as adding its own rich flavor.

RAW PEANUTS GIVE BETTER FLAVOR

For candy with a rich peanut flavor, use raw nuts: the Spanish variety (with red, papery skins) or blanched raw peanuts. Raw nuts can be added relatively early in the cooking process. They'll flavor the syrup as they cook and give the brittle a nuttier taste. Look for Spanish or blanched raw peanuts in well-stocked supermarkets or in health-food stores.

If you use roasted nuts, however, add them at the end of the cooking time. If added too soon, roasted nuts could burn and leave the candy with a bitter taste. Warm roasted nuts first in a 250°F oven. Adding cold nuts to the hot syrup could cause it to seize and crystallize. Also, if the nuts are salted, omit the salt in the recipe.



An oiled surface makes the candy easier to handle. Use marble or an inverted baking sheet—the candy is hot, over 300°F, when you pour it out.



The peanuts toast and even pop a bit as the sugar syrup turns a rich, light-golden color.
They'll flavor the syrup as they cook and make the brittle taste nuttier.

Other nuts—particularly soft-textured ones like pecans, cashews, and walnuts—are more susceptible to burning, which can make the candy bitter. If you want to make brittle with any of these nuts, add them when the sugar syrup has almost finished cooking, at around 290°F.

STRETCHING MAKES THE CANDY THIN

Stretching the candy while it's still hot and pliable makes a thinner brittle that's easier to eat. It takes less than a minute for the mixture to cool enough so that you can begin stretching. Wearing rubber gloves so you don't burn your hands, lift the edges and pull gently. If the peanut brittle is still too hot, wait five seconds and try again. Don't just pull along the edges but from the middle, too, to make the brittle as thin as possible. The nuts should be just barely bound together with tender, crunchy candy.

Traditional Peanut Brittle

The relatively large proportion of corn syrup in this recipe prevents the sugar syrup from crystallizing. There's no need to wash down the sides of the pan or take any other precautions against crystallization as you do with other candymaking. Yields about 2 pounds.

Unflavored vegetable oil for greasing the slab ½ tsp. baking soda ½ tsp. salt 1 tsp. vanilla extract ½ cup water ¾ cup light corn syrup



Thick gloves are a must for protecting your fingers from the hot candy. Stretch the brittle as thin as you can so that the nuts are just barely bound together with the thin, crunchy candy.



Delicious peanut brittle is quick to make, pretty to pack, and great to give. It will stay fresh for about ten days, so you can make some before the holiday rush.

2 cups sugar 1½ cups raw peanuts (Spanish or blanched) 2 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened

Generously oil an 18-inch-square marble slab (or an inverted baking sheet) and a thin metal spatula. Sift the baking soda and salt onto a small sheet of waxed paper. Measure the vanilla extract into a small container. Set all of these near your work area, along with a pair of rubber gloves.

In a 4-qt., deep, heavy-based saucepan, combine the water, corn syrup, and sugar. Stir over medium-low heat until the sugar dissolves, 10 to 12 min. When the solution is clear and begins to boil, increase the heat to high and stop stirring. Put a candy thermometer in the solution, holding it with a mitt to protect your hand. When the mixture registers 265°F on the thermometer, 8 to 10 min. later, add the nuts and stir gently to disperse them through the mixture. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the mixture reaches the hard-crack stage, 305° to

310°F, about 5 min. longer. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the softened butter, the vanilla extract, and then the baking soda and salt. The mixture will begin to foam.

Stir just until the mixture foams evenly, and without delay pour it onto the oiled marble slab. The mixture should spread to about 14 inches in diameter. Slip the oiled spatula under the hot candy to loosen the edges and bottom. Put on the gloves and as soon as the candy is firm enough on the bottom to be picked up (the top won't be hard yet), lift the edges and turn the entire piece of brittle over. With gloved hands, stretch the brittle to extend it so it's as thin as you can get it, about 17 inches in diameter. Let the candy cool undisturbed for at least 1 hour and then break it into small pieces. Store the brittle in airtight containers for up to 10 days.

Flo Braker is the author of The Simple Art of Perfect Baking (Chapters, 1992). She lives in Palo Alto, California. ◆

hotos except where noted: Ben Fink

A meal in one pan. Whether it's dinner for two or brunch for six, frittatas mean easy, satisfying meals and an infinite range of flavors.



Follow this basic method for any type of frittata



Whisk the eggs vigorously. Mix in the seasonings or herbs and a little milk, if your recipe calls for it. Heat the oven to 400°F.



Thoroughly cook any ingredients that need cooking, such as onions, potatoes, or spinach. Use about 3 tablespoons butter or oil. Turn the heat to medium high and pour the eggs into the pan.



Easy Frittatas for Any Meal

Make a delicious, rustic omelet with your favorite ingredients—try asparagus and mushroom or spinach and Gruyère

BY REGINA SCHRAMBLING

y first job out of cooking school was making omelets, hundreds every weekend morning—huge, puffy omelets that involved a lot of whisking and a crucial, high-flying, risky flip halfway through the cooking. I got pretty good at it, but I always thought there had to be a better way. There is—making a frittata, the Italian rustic, openfaced omelet. You start a frittata on the stovetop and, after just a little lifting and stirring of the eggs, you finish the dish by baking it in the oven, where it gets puffed and golden brown.

Frittatas are inexpensive and endlessly variable because you can add almost any type of filling; best of all, they're really easy to whip up fast. A frittata can make a supper for two or a crowd-pleasing



Let the eggs set for several seconds. With a heatproof rubber spatula, gently stir the eggs, starting from the center. This stirring makes the frittata puff up more in the oven.



Lift the edges so that the eggs flow to the bottom. When the frittata is half-set, add any other ingredients.



Transfer the pan to the heated oven. Cook for about 10 minutes (less if you like runny eggs), until puffed and golden.

brunch, but unlike individual omelets for, say, six, you only need to do the work once, and in one pan.

FRESH EGGS FOR FLAVOR AND A HEAVY-DUTY SKILLET FOR HEAT CONTROL

Unless you've tasted truly fresh eggs, you may not think there's much difference between them and grocery-store eggs, but trust me, there is. I buy extralarge eggs at the farmers' market, figuring two per person for frittatas. If you don't have a source for farm-fresh eggs, check the dates on the supermarket egg cartons and buy the very freshest you can find.

My trustiest frittata skillet is an enameled castiron pan, 10 inches in diameter. The enameled surface is relatively nonstick, and the pan is heavy enough to distribute the heat so that the eggs cook evenly without turning rubbery. You'll get very good results with well-seasoned cast iron or commercial-weight nonstick (like Circulon), too. The wooden handle on my magic pan isn't ovenproof, so I wrap it in foil to prevent burning. I use the same skillet no

Frittatas are more forgiving than omelets—there's no flipping or rolling required.

matter how many eggs I'm using. More eggs just makes a thicker frittata, which you can cut into smaller wedges.

The other bit of equipment that's nice to have is a heavy-duty rubber spatula that won't melt—look for models made by Rubbermaid and Le Creuset.

FRITTATAS TASTE GREAT AT ANY MEAL

I always let a frittata sit a few minutes before I cut it so the flavors intensify. Unlike omelets, which have the shelf life of hot toast, frittatas are equally delicious hot or at room temperature. To get the finished frittata out of the pan, loosen the edges with a spatula or a knife and slide the frittata onto a platter. Or you can simply cut wedges and lift them right out of the pan.

The potato version at right is great for breakfast; the spinach and mushroom variation is an unbeatable lunch; and the chorizo and corn frittata makes a satisfying supper served with a black bean salad and cornbread. Italians cut frittatas into thin strips for a sandwich filling; the smoked trout and avocado frittata is especially good that way. I love them sliced in thin wedges and served with drinks, like the Spanish do with their frittata kin, the *tortilla*.

Regina Schrambling is a cook and freelance writer who makes her frittatas in New York City. ◆

Five frittata recipes to make in under 20 minutes

Here are some of my favorite ingredient combinations, but don't be afraid to improvise—a frittata is an honorable destination for leftovers. These recipes serve four as a main dish.

Potato & Ham Frittata



Potato & Ham Frittata makes a hearty breakfast.

Eggs: 8 extra-large eggs, whisked with 1 Tbs. Dijon mustard, 2 Tbs. milk, and salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste.

Other ingredients: 1 small onion, thinly sliced, and 4 small red-skinned potatoes, sliced ½-inch thick, all seasoned with salt and sautéed until tender in 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil; 1 cup diced ham.

Spinach & Mushroom Frittata



A Spinach & Mushroom Frittata is good for lunch, or any meal.

Eggs: 8 extra-large eggs, whisked with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste, 2 Tbs. milk, and a dash of hot sauce.

Other ingredients: 1 large bunch fresh spinach, stemmed, washed, drained, chopped, and sautéed; ¼ lb. mushrooms, trimmed, wiped, and thinly sliced; ¾ cup grated Gruyère.

Asparagus & Wild Mushroom Frittata

Eggs: 8 extra-large eggs whisked with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

Other ingredients: ¼ lb. wild mushrooms (morels, cèpes, chanterelles, or oyster mushrooms), sautéed in butter and seasoned with salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste; ⅓ lb. asparagus, trimmed, steamed and cut into 1-inch lengths; 2 Tbs. freshly grated Parmesan.

Chorizo & Corn Frittata



Chorizo & Corn Frittata can be a do-ahead hors d'oeuvre or a satisfying supper.

Eggs: 8 extra-large eggs whisked with 2 Tbs. milk and salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

Other ingredients: ½ lb. chorizo or Italian sausage, crumbled and cooked; 1 cup cooked corn kernels; 2 oz. Monterey Jack cheese, sliced and cut into thin strips.

Smoked Trout & Avocado Frittata

Eggs: 8 extra-large eggs whisked with 4 Tbs. fresh snipped chives, ½ tsp. lemon zest, and salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Other ingredients: ¼ lb. flaked smoked trout or other hot-smoked fish; 1 small avocado, cut into small dice.

Baking Light-as-Air Brioche

The keys to this moist, rich bread are kneading it to elastic smoothness, proofing it overnight for more flavor, and shaping it like a pro

BY GLENN MITCHELL

ast year I had the exhilarating, nerve-wracking experience of going to Paris to compete in the Coupe du Monde, a worldwide pastry and baking competition. As you can imagine, it was a real change of pace from my everyday life, running a baking business with my wife, Cynthia. It was a week I'll always remember, in large part because our team won high marks for brioche-type breads, those yeastraised doughs that get their taste and tenderness from lots of eggs and butter.

It was a big thrill to get competition honors for such a challenging dough. But because we had all practiced hard and mastered the tricks—measuring precisely, using the freshest eggs, keeping the dough



"A brioche roll smeared with fruit jam is the best breakfast I can think of," says author Glenn Mitchell.



Though brioche takes practice, it's not fancy, temperamental pastry. Both fluffy and rich, it has an unforgettably tender texture.

Dissolve the yeast and mix the dough



In a mixing bowl, dissolve the yeast in the milk.



Mix together the flour, sugar, and salt in another bowl. Make a well in the dry ingredients. Pour the milk and yeast mixture into the well and start to mix with your hands.



Mix until you have a smooth, well-combined dough that you can pick up and take out of the bowl. Start adding the eggs, one at a time. Mix with your hands, adding another egg when the dough starts to feel firmer and less slippery.

TIPS FOR KEEPING THE DOUGH COOL

Kneading tends to heat up the dough, which means that when you start working in the butter, it runs the risk of melting and slipping out. Here are ways to prevent butter fallout.

- ◆ Chill the flour in the refrigerator.
- ◆ A granite countertop is best for kneading. If you don't have one, cool your work surface with ice packs before kneading.
- ◆ Stash the dough in the fridge for a fiveminute cool-down if you feel its surface getting slick.

cool enough to hold the butter—we made moist, fluffy brioche with a thin golden crust, a yellow, tender interior, and a deliciously eggy, buttery taste.

You've probably seen brioche in various shapes and sizes—braids, rings, loaves, rounds, and cylinders. My favorite, though, is the classic fluted shape with a hat, called a *brioche à tête* (brioche with a head). When you're first learning to shape this classic brioche, it's easier to start with small, individual rolls.

FRESH INGREDIENTS, PRECISELY MEASURED

Brioche is from the northern dairy farming regions

of France, where some of the finest-quality butters are produced. I believe that the butter makes the brioche. I use Plugrá, an American butter that has deeper flavor and more butterfat than most supermarket brands. If your market sells French butter such as Echiré or Président, you might try one of them. You

can, of course, use regular unsalted American butter, if that's your only option; just make sure it's fresh and it hasn't picked up any flavors from your refrigerator. Your eggs should be as fresh as possible so you'll get the eggiest flavor. Your flour should be all-purpose, 11½% protein or higher (the package should read 3 grams protein per serving). The flour should be

very fresh; the moisture content of older flour is unpredictable, and this can throw off your proportions.

Measuring precisely yields more consistent results. I weigh everything, including the eggs, adding part of an egg or a little milk to get the exact weight, because the correct ratio of wet to dry is crucial. Brioche dough that's too wet will be slack and hard to

handle, and it won't spring up as pertly during baking. Dough that's too dry will give you brioche that's heavy and dry, rather than light and fluffy.

KNEAD BY HAND AND KEEP A CLOSE WATCH

A dough with this much butter needs a close watch so it gets just the right amount of mixing

and doesn't overheat. Undermixing can result in dough that's heavy and rises sluggishly. Overmixing overheats the dough, which in turn may cripple the yeast or cause the butter to fall out of the dough.

Kneading is easier on a cool countertop. I like to use marble or granite, if possible, but if you don't have these, see the sidebar at left for tricks on keeping the

60 FINE COOKING

It's the butter that really

makes the brioche,

so use the very best

you can find.

Knead the dough and do a "stretch test" for doneness



On a cool, lightly floured countertop, knead the dough—slapping it down onto the counter, pushing it away with the heel of your hand, and folding it over. It may feel sticky, but don't add flour—use a scraper instead. Knead for about 5 minutes.



Do a "stretch test" to see if you're finished kneading. If the gluten has been sufficiently developed, the dough will pull almost like bubble gum.

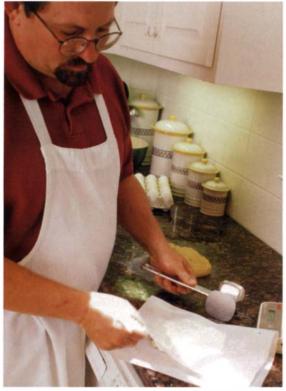
dough cool. You knead the basic dough until it starts to get smooth, and then you'll start working in the butter. The kneading is a combination of folding, pushing, throwing, and slapping motions. You'll be tempted to add flour to this sticky dough, but don't: use a scraper instead. Additional flour will dry out the dough, producing a tougher, less tasty result.

Pounding the cold butter with a mallet or a rolling pin makes it more pliable so it's easier to break into pieces and add to the dough.

When you've started adding the butter, it's important to work quickly. The warmth of your hands will help incorporate the butter into the dough, but too much handling will turn the doughslick and oily, which means that butter's starting to fall out. If you feel this happening, gather up the dough and stash it in the fridge for a five-minute cool-down. Again, use a scraper. Keep kneading, and what happens next is really kind of wild—this sticky dough will transform into a smooth, silky dough that will almost shimmer.

A COLD, OVERNIGHT RISE AND
A WARM-OVEN PROOF DEVELOP THE DOUGH
This brioche gets added taste and tenderness from

Pound the butter and knead it into the dough a little at a time



Take the cold butter from the refrigerator and beat it between kitchen parchment or butter wrappers with a mallet or a rolling pin until it's pliable but still very cold.



Break off pieces of butter and knead it in, bit by bit, pressing down lumps with your knuckles or the heel of your hand. The dough will be sticky—use a scraper. When the dough feels like it's absorbing the butter, add more butter. If the dough gets very slick and shiny, the butter is starting to fall out, so gather the dough up and let it cool off in the fridge for 5 minutes.



Continue kneading and slapping until the dough is smooth with no lumps, 3 to 4 minutes. It should start to pull away from the counter, feel silky, and almost shimmer. Return it to the bowl, cover with plastic, and let it sit at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Punch down, chill, and repeat



To punch down the dough, transfer it to a lightly floured surface and shape it into a rectangle.



Fold the dough in half, patting it to remove air bubbles. Give the dough a quarter turn and repeat the entire procedure twice more. Return the dough to the rising bowl, seam side down. Cover and refrigerate for 2 to 3 hours. Repeat the same foldand-pat steps as before and then refrigerate the dough overnight.

Cut dough into equal pieces for shaping



Gently remove the dough from its rising bowl and transfer it to a lightly floured work surface. Flatten the dough, pushing out air bubbles. Cut it into 16 equal pieces weighing 2 to 3 ounces each.

On a lightly floured surface, roll each piece into a smooth ball. Smooth the top surface of the dough to form a taut skin and tuck the excess under, seam side down. Try not to overhandle the dough.



spending the night in the refrigerator. The long, cold rise gives the gluten time to relax, which makes the dough easier to shape. The long rise also gives the dough time to lose its yeasty taste and develop deep eggy, buttery flavors.

You'll shape the dough following the photos above. Don't be afraid to handle the dough firmly and poke all the way down to secure the hats. Again, remember that it's important to work quickly.

Make a "proofing box" for the shaped loaves. The rise between shaping and baking is called a proof. Professional bakers use temperature- and humidity-controlled boxes, but you can make your own proofing box at home, putting a rimmed baking sheet filled with hot tap water in the oven (don't turn it on) along with the shaped loaves. Small brioches will take about an hour to proof; large ones usually need an hour and a half.

Proofed loaves should grow to 1½ to 2 times their size and spring back gently when you poke them. It takes a little practice, but if you're not sure, underproofing is better than overproofing: you're apt to get better spring-up during baking with underproofing.

You'll brush the loaves with an egg glaze both before and after the proof; this double coat gives an especially lovely sheen. Rotate the sheets halfway through baking, and take the rolls out when they're a deep golden brown. The brioches are done when a cake tester comes out clean.

Brioche à Tête

You can bake this dough in any loaf pan, but fluted molds will give you that fetching shape. Try 75-gram molds; they're 2^{7} 8 inches in top diameter and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches high. Amounts for many ingredients are listed by weight (ounces) and by volume (cups, tablespoons); use either measurement. Yields 16 small brioches.

FOR THE DOUGH:

3/4 oz. compressed yeast

11/4 oz. (3 Tbs.) milk, at room temperature
18 oz. (4 cups) all-purpose flour

2 oz. (4 Tbs.) sugar

1/2 oz. (1 Tbs.) salt

8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter, well chilled

9 oz. (just a bit less than 5 large) eggs

FOR THE EGG WASH: 1 large egg, beaten Pinch salt 1 tsp. water

For the procedure, follow the photos starting on p. 60.

Glenn Mitchell and his wife, Cynthia, own Grace Baking Company in Albany, California. •

Shape each brioche and brush with egg wash



Form the "hat" by placing the side of your hand on the dough ball one-third of the way down. Saw back and forth almost all the way through, until you get a shape similar to a bowling pin



Hold the dough by the "hat" and gently lower it into a buttered fluted brioche mold.



Dust your finger with flour and tuck the "hat" down into the dough. Poke holes all around the edge of the "hat," going clear down to the bottom of the pan, so the hat will be firmly tucked in and won't pop out during baking. Brush the loaves with the egg wash.

Proof, brush again with egg wash, and bake until golden brown



Set a jelly roll pan or sheet pan in the oven (don't turn it on) and fill it with hot tap water. Let the brioches proof in the oven for an hour, or until they're doubled in bulk. Brush them again with egg wash.



Heat the oven to 400°F and bake the brioches on a baking sheet for 15 to 17 minutes, rotating the sheets halfway through baking. The brioches are done when they're deep golden brown and a cake tester comes out clean.







"We make sure we have loads of different cookies ready for gifts and guests," says Abby Dodge. Son Alex and daughter Tierney always pitch in.

Baking Irresistible Holiday Cookies

Make crinkles, drops, bars, cut-outs, wafers, and swirls for a generous, tempting assortment to give and to enjoy

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

A last-minute touch. For Cream Cheese Swirls to look and taste

viving and receiving handmade cookies is a holiday ritual for my circle of friends. We've even formalized our ritual and named it—the Cookie Exchange. Each Christmas, about twelve of us volunteer to bake a certain cookie. We each arrive toting twelve dozen of our cookie and give a dozen cookies to each person. In the end we each come away with twelve different cookies, a dozen of each. As you can guess, everyone goes away happy.

The Cookie Exchange has become a great way to catch up with each other, so we chat for a while before passing the cookies around. Tasting on the spot is forbidden—we save the cookies to bring back to our families and to serve over the holidays. It's about swapping and sharing, rather than being a contest or a bake-off.

"No holiday cookie should be too timeconsuming," says Abby Dodge, "but it's okay to include one in the assortment that needs a little detail work."

Every year my husband and kids eagerly await the loot I'll cart home from the Cookie Exchange. There's anticipation for me, too, as I deliberate over just which cookie would be the tastiest complement to the group's assortment. Sometimes I go for an old standby; other years, I'll try out a new recipe.

Not everyone goes to the lengths my cookiebaking pals and I do, but after all these years of exchanging, I have plenty of opinions about what makes a tempting cookie and what comprises an impressive assortment.

A GOOD COOKIE IS ONE YOU CAN'T RESIST

One of the most important things about cookies at holiday time is that there should be lots of different kinds to satisfy everyone's taste.

Vary textures and make them appealing. Cookies are as much about texture as they are about taste. Whether it's crumbly, chewy, crunchy, or soft, the texture should make you want to eat another. Follow the recipe doneness tests for look and feel.

Vary flavors. Make them strong—whether spicy, lemony, buttery, or chocolatey, a cookie should announce its intentions. When it comes to cookies, meek flavors don't cut it.

The spicy Ginger Crackles here are chewy, oldfashioned cookies with broad appeal, while the Coffee Thins are more of an adult cookie: sophisticated and full of coffee flavor. Buttery Cream Cheese Swirls have an accent of tart fruit jam. Chocolatetopped Hazelnut Toffee Bars are candy-like in intensity, while Chocolate Cut-Outs offer more subdued chocolate flavor. Lemon Snow Drops add delicious



their best, dab on the preserves right before serving or giving.

contrast to the spice, coffee, butter, and chocolate flavors in the mix.

Make sure your cookies look fetching. Garnish the cookies that seem too plain on their own. Granulated sugar baked onto crinkle cookies adds sparkle; a coating of confectioners' sugar gives lemon drops snowy whiteness after they're baked. A dollop of jam brightens a spritzed butter cookie.

Every holiday mix needs decorated cookies. This year, I'm cutting a rich, buttery cocoa dough into star shapes. The brown cookie is a perfect background for piped royal icing, gold *dragées*, or even gold leaf (one source is Maid of Scandinavia, 800/328-6722). To make royal icing, beat together

three egg whites, one pound of confectioners' sugar, and a few drops of vanilla extract until the mixture is thick and shiny, about five minutes.

USE UNSALTED BUTTER, ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR, AND FRESH FLAVORINGS

Good-quality ingredients will go a long way toward making

your cookies taste their best. I start getting equipped a few weeks before the cookie bakefest.

Unsalted butter gives the best flavor and allows you to control exactly how much salt you're adding to the cookie dough. I stock up on butter when it's on sale and freeze it until I'm ready to use it. *Never* substitute margarine; the cookies will spread more during baking, and they won't taste good.

All-purpose flour contains sufficient protein to give the dough its body and the cookie its bite. You'll find different flours across the country; here on the East Coast, I like King Arthur flour.

Large eggs will give you more consistent results because they're the standard used in recipes (unless another size is specified).

Fresh flavorings mean tastier cookies. Start with new containers of spices, coffee, and extracts—you'll go through them quickly at this time of year.

PLAN AHEAD TO LIGHTEN THE WORKLOAD

I spread out the preparation over several weeks to make holiday baking easier. Here are a few strategies.

Shape and freeze some of the doughs. You can do this up to a month in advance for the Ginger Crackles, the Coffee Thins, and the Chocolate

Cut-Outs.

Bake and freeze the cookies. You can bake, decorate, and freeze cut-out cookies as long as you're not using gold or silver decorations, which will lose their shine in the freezer.

Bake ahead and store in airtight containers. Assume that your recipients will keep

the cookies around for a few days, so if you bake ahead, do it no more than a week in advance.

Leave a few cookies for the last day or two. Some softer cookies, like the Cream Cheese Swirls, are delicate, and they easily pick up other flavors. Bake these just a day or two ahead and layer them in an airtight container between sheets of waxed paper. Dab them with jam at the last minute.

PACK COOKIES FOR GIFT-GIVING

Early in the season, compile a list of friends and relatives who will receive the cookies. If you're mak-

Keys to cookie-baking success

- ♦ Weigh flour, cocoa, and confectioners' and brown sugars. You'll get more accurate results. If you do measure by volume, fluff the dry ingredients before you spoon them (rather than pour them) into the measuring cup. Level off flour, cocoa, and confectioners' sugar; pack brown sugar firmly.
- ♦ Blend ingredients when they're at room tempera-

ture. Butter will be easier to cream, and all ingredients will be easier to incorporate.

Most of these cookie

doughs freeze well,

so you can do some

of the work ahead.

◆ Mix the dough just until well blended. This is how you'll get tender cookies. The gluten in all-purpose flour gives body to the dough, which is a must for cookies to have "bite," but overmixing will make them hard and tough. I like to use an electric mixer because it's

faster, but mixing by hand works well, too.

- ◆ Line baking sheets with kitchen parchment. Parchment eliminates the need for greasing and makes cleanup easier. It's inexpensive, too. If you don't want to use parchment, grease your baking sheets lightly.
- ◆ Rotate the baking sheets. Most ovens have hot spots.



To ensure evenly baked and evenly browned batches, rotate the sheets from side to side and from rack to rack during baking.



Bake ahead for gift-giving. Baked cookies stay fresh for up to a week if you store them in airtight containers.

ing all six in this selection, plan to give about 18 cookies (three of each type) to each person. It's a good idea to make extra to have on hand for drop-in guests and hostess gifts. I like giving cookies in decorated tins, or in plastic, cellophane, or cardboard boxes. I add a tag with a personal greeting and list the cookies that I've packed inside.

Note—For all recipes, ingredient amounts are given by weight and by volume; use either measurement.

Ginger Crackles

To freeze these ahead, put the sugared dough balls on a tray in the freezer until they're rock-hard and then stash them in zip-top bags. When it's time to bake, arrange them on cookie sheets and let them thaw while the oven heats up. Yields about 3 dozen cookies.

10 oz. (2¼ cups) all-purpose flour
2 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. baking soda
¾ tsp. ground cinnamon
½ tsp. ground cloves
¼ tsp. salt
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature
¼ cup shortening
1⅓ cups sugar
1 large egg
¼ cup molasses

Heat the oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, combine the flour, ginger, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves, and salt. In another large bowl, beat the butter, shortening, and 1 cup of the sugar with a mixer or a wooden spoon

until well combined. Add the egg and molasses to the butter mixture; beat well. Add the dry ingredients and mix until well blended, scraping down the bowl often (if you're using an electric mixer, set it on low speed). Shape the dough into 1-inch balls. Roll each ball in the remaining sugar. Put the balls 2 inches apart (they need room to spread) on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until the cookies are lightly browned around the edges and puffed, about 13 min. Let the cookies sit for 5 min. and then transfer them to a rack to cool completely.

Coffee Thins

 $5\frac{1}{2}$ oz. (1\frac{1}{4} cups) all-purpose flour

This dough freezes well, too, if you seal the log in plastic wrap. The night before you're ready to bake, transfer the dough to the refrigerator to defrost. *Yields about 28 cookies*.

Pinch ground cinnamon
Pinch salt
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2½ oz. (½ cup firmly packed) dark brown sugar
1 tsp. instant coffee or espresso powder, dissolved in 2 tsp.
coffee-flavored liqueur or water

Combine the flour, cinnamon, and salt. In a large bowl, beat the butter and brown sugar with a wooden spoon or a mixer until well blended; stir in the dissolved coffee. Add the flour mixture; mix until the dough is blended and begins to clump together (if you're using an electric mixer, set it on low speed). Pile the dough onto a large piece of plastic wrap. Using the wrap as a guide, shape the dough into a squared-off log 7 inches long. Chill until quite firm, at least 6 hours and up to 3 days.

Heat the oven to 350° F. Cut the dough in $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices; set them 1 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake until the tops look dry and the edges are slightly browned, about 12 min. Transfer to a rack to cool completely.

Cream Cheese Swirls

Piping is easier if the butter and cream cheese are at room temperature and if you work with small amounts of dough in the piping bag. Yields about 4 dozen cookies.

8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature 8 oz. cream cheese, at room temperature 1 cup sugar 1 tsp. vanilla extract 10 oz. (2½ cups) all-purpose flour Apricot or raspberry preserves

Heat the oven to 350°F. With a wooden spoon or a mixer, beat the butter, cream cheese, and sugar until very smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl often (if you're using an electric mixer, set it on medium speed). Stir in the vanilla. Add the flour; mix until just combined. Fit a pastry bag with a wide star tip and fill the bag with the dough. On parchment-lined cookie sheets, pipe the dough in 1½-inch "S" shapes about 1½ inches apart. Press your thumb into each end of the "S", leaving a small indentation. Bake until light brown around the edges, 17 to 19 min. Transfer the cookies to a rack to cool completely. Fill each indentation with about ½ tsp. of preserves.

Get a head start on holiday cookie-baking

ONE MONTH AHEAD

Assemble and freeze these doughs:

- ◆ Ginger Crackles
- ◆ Coffee Thins
- ◆ Chocolate Cut-Outs

ONE WEEK TO

THREE DAYS AHEAD

Bake and store in airtight containers:

- ◆ Lemon Snow Drops
- ♦ Hazelnut Toffee Squares

THREE DAYS AHEAD

Bake and store in airtight containers:

- ◆ Ginger Crackles
- ◆ Coffee Thins
- ◆ Chocolate Cut-Outs

TWO DAYS AHEAD

Bake Cream Cheese Swirls; store separately

ONE DAY AHEAD

Decorate Cream Cheese Swirls



Freeze ahead to spread out the work. These dough balls will need just a 15-minute thaw before baking.

Hazelnut Toffee Squares

You can make a lot of these in one batch. Be sure to let the chocolate set before you cut the cookies. *Yields about 6 dozen squares.*

8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature 8 oz. (1 cup firmly packed) dark brown sugar 1 large egg yolk 1 tsp. vanilla extract ¼ tsp. salt 9 oz. (2 cups) all-purpose flour 10 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped ¼ cup milk 3½ oz. (1 cup) chopped hazelnuts, toasted

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 13x9-inch baking pan. With a wooden spoon or a mixer, cream the butter and brown sugar until smooth and no lumps remain. Add the egg yolk, vanilla, and salt; beat until well blended. Add the flour; mix until dough begins to come together (if you're using an electric mixer, set it on low speed). Pat the dough into the pan. Bake until dough begins to pull away from the sides of the pan and keeps a slight indentation when pressed lightly, 26 to 28 min. Meanwhile, melt the chocolate and the milk in a double boiler, stirring as little as possible to prevent separating. Pour the warm ganache over the warm baked cookie crust and spread it evenly. Sprinkle with the nuts and let cool completely until chocolate has set, about 4 hours. Cut into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch squares.

Lemon Snow Drops

These stay fresh for up to a week; reroll them in confectioners' sugar before serving. *Yields about 3 dozen cookies*.

FOR THE DOUGH:

8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter, at room temperature 2½ oz. (¾ cup) confectioners' sugar 2½ tsp. grated lemon zest 2 tsp. lemon juice Pinch salt 11¾ oz. (2⅔ cups) all-purpose flour

FOR ROLLING:

1 cup confectioners' sugar

Heat the oven to 325°F. Beat the butter and sugar together with a wooden spoon or a mixer until creamy.

Add the lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt; mix until combined. Add the flour; mix until just blended. Shape the dough into 1-inch balls and set them 1 inch apart on ungreased or parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake until the cookies are light golden and give slightly when pressed, 18 to 20 min. Let the cookies cool slightly on the baking sheet; while still warm, roll them in confectioners' sugar. Transfer to a rack to cool completely.

Chocolate Cut-Outs

Use nonalkalized (natural) cocoa, such as Hershey's or Nestlé, rather than Dutchprocessed for more straightahead chocolate flavor. *Yields about 4 dozen 2½-inch cookies*.

10 oz. (2½ cups) all-purpose flour
1½ oz. (½ cup) nonalkalized
cocoa
Pinch salt
8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter,
at room temperature
34 cup sugar
1½ tsp. vanilla extract

Combine the flour, cocoa, and salt. In a large bowl, beat the butter, sugar, and vanilla until

well blended. Add the flour mixture; beat until well blended (if you're using an electric mixer, set it on low speed). Divide the dough and shape it into two flat disks; wrap one in plastic while you work with the other. Heat the oven to 350°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disk 3% inch thick. Cut out shapes and set them 1 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Repeat with the other disk. Combine the scraps, chill them if they feel warm, and reroll. Bake the cookies until the tops look dry and you see flaky layers when you break a cookie in half. Transfer to a rack to cool completely. Decorate the cooled cookies.

Abby Dodge is a pastry chef, cookbook author, recipe developer, and Fine Cooking's recipe tester. She lives in Southport, Connecticut, where these days you just might catch her baking holiday cookies.



Chocolate Cut-Outs are a perfect "canvas" for decorating. Pipe on royal icing, or even use edible gold leaf, applied with a small paint brush.

turkey can be a pleasure, not a worry. roportion to bone. good turkey locally, nail-order sources.

Roasting a great

Roasting a perfect turkey

Even the most confident cook can be intimidated by the task of roasting the holiday turkey. After all, it's hard to get much practice when you only do turkey once a year. But in reality, creating a picture-perfect roast turkey—with crisp skin, moist breast meat, done dark meat, and a panful of good drippings for gravy—is a straightforward affair.

Fresh turkeys are usually superior to

frozen, especially the frozen ones labeled "self-basting" (mean-

ing that they've been injected with fat and water). If you do buy a frozen one, allow several days to let it thaw in the refrigerator.

For birds under 16 pounds, figure at least 1 pound of turkey per person. For larger birds, figure a bit less since there

will be more meat in proportion to bone.

If you can't find a good turkey locally, here are some good mail-order sources. Be sure to order in plenty of time.

- d'Artagnan (800/327-8246)
- Murray's (800/741-3871)
- Citarella (800/588-0383)

What should I do to it, before and during cooking?

The best pan for cooking a turkey is a heavy-duty roasting pan with about 2-inch sides. High sides prevent the lower part of the bird from browning and can make basting difficult. Heavy-gauge metal helps keep the drippings from burning.

Prepare the bird by cleaning, tying, and seasoning. Remove the giblets from the body and neck cavities and rinse and dry the turkey. If you're handling a really large bird, you may just want to wipe it down with moist towels rather than wrestle with it in the sink. Once dried, sprinkle the insides with a little salt and stuff the bird if that's your plan (see "How to Make").



Tuck the wing tips to secure the neck flaps.

Moist, Delicious Stuffing," p. 39).

Before setting the bird in the pan, fold the wings back to secure the neck flap (use a skewer or a toothpick if the flap isn't long enough). Then use kitchen string

to loosely tie the drumsticks. Tying them too tightly can prevent the thighs from cooking evenly. Some turkeys come with a metal clasp or a slit in the tail skin to allow you to simply tuck the legs together before roasting.

Get a beautifully brown and crisp skin by rubbing softened butter all over the surface of the turkey. Baste the bird every 30 to 45 minutes with the pan juices. A wide spoon works even better than a turkey baster, especially at the start when there's little juice. If the turkey doesn't yield much juice even after an hour, baste it with a bit more melted butter or oil.

Is it done?

The only reliable test for doneness is to check the internal temperature. Wiggling the leg to see if it's loose will give you an indication that the turkey is ready, but unfortunately, by the time the leg is truly loose, the turkey is sadly overcooked. Insert a thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh, without touching the bone. It should read 175° to 180°F, and the juices should run clear. The breast meat will always cook more quickly. If the turkey is stuffed, don't forget to



Use the chart as guide and a thermometer to be sure.

check the stuffing's temperature as well: it must be at least 160°F. If the turkey is done before the stuffing, take the turkey from the oven and scoop the stuffing into a casserole to finish cooking on its own. Let the turkey rest for 20 to 30 minutes before carving. (See "Carving a Turkey," Fine Cooking #18, p. 18.)

Molly Stevens roasts her holiday turkeys in Vermont. ◆

Cooking time and temperature

Position the rack in the lowest part of the oven and heat the oven. While some cooks like to blast the turkey with high heat (425°F) for 30 minutes and then reduce the temperature, I prefer the simple, carefree method of an even 325°F from start to finish. The high-heat method may shave 30 to 90 minutes off the cooking time, but it's one more thing for me to remember on a very busy kitchen day.

Start with the legs pointing toward the back of the oven, since it's the hottest. If your turkey is large, the hot air may have trouble circulating and may create hot spots. If one

part of the bird is browning too quickly, rotate the pan during roasting. Tent the bird with foil about two-thirds of the way through cooking to prevent it from overbrowning.

COOKING TIMES FOR	R A STUFFED TURKEY
8 to 12 pounds	3 to 4 hours
12 to 16 pounds	4 to 41/2 hours
16 to 20 pounds	4½ to 5 hours
20 to 26 pounds	5 to 6 hours
* subtract 20 to 40 min	utes for an unstuffed bird

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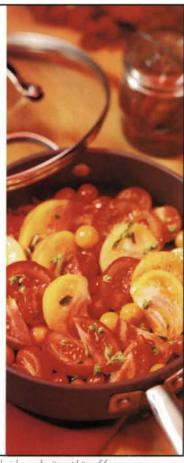
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Cloves Add Spicy Warmth to Holiday Fare

Cloves say "winter holidays" more than any other spice. Think of fragrant baked ham studded with whole cloves. Of the inviting scent of mulled wine simmering on the stove and pomander balls hung on the Christmas tree with red velvet ribbon. Of clove-accented gingerbread, fruitcake, and mincemeat and pumpkin pies.

But cloves aren't just for the holidays. Year-round, you can find aromatic cloves in pickling spices, in Chinese five-spice powder, and in Indian curries and chutneys. A hint of their fruity, pungent, tingly warm flavor adds an intriguing accent to beef and lamb stews, to chile sauce, and even to ketchup.

PLUMP CLOVES INDICATE QUALITY

Cloves are the unopened flower buds of the tropical clove evergreen. The buds are picked by hand just as they turn pink; they're then dried to a brownish black.

A clove tree is like those of us who live in Cape Cod—it must see the sea and the bay to grow and blossom properly. Most of the world's cloves come from the Spice Islands of Indonesia, where clove trees flourish on thousands of acres in a tropical, maritime climate. High-quality cloves are also harvested in Brazil, Madagascar, and Tanzania. The best cloves are reddish brown, smooth, and plump, with lighter colored heads and a powerful aroma.

Whole cloves last longer than ground. Ground cloves will quickly lose their essential oil and fragrance; it's better to buy whole cloves and grind them as needed. Like most spices, cloves should be kept in an airtight container in a cool, dark place. Never store ground cloves in plastic jars; the released oils can dissolve some plastics.

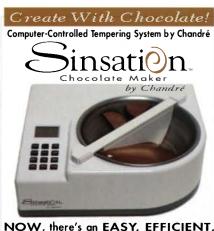
A little bit of cloves goes a long way. The strong flavor of cloves, if used with a heavy hand, can overpower a dish, making it bitter. Most recipes call for just a pinch of ground cloves or only one or two whole cloves. If you're using good-quality, highly aromatic cloves, use a little less than what the recipe calls for.

Mark and Eleanora Irving are co-owners of Atlantic Spice Company in North Truro, Massachusetts. ◆

EXPERIMENT WITH CLOVES

- ◆ Poke a clove into a whole onion (to make it easier to retrieve later) and add to chicken stock, or add a clove to a bouquet garnifor a more complex-flavored stock.
- ◆ Add a pinch of ground cloves to a pot of chili for an authentic Mexican flavor that adds a subtle kind of heat.
- ◆ Spice up glazed carrots with a tiny pinch of ground cloves.
- Give your favorite coffee cake a slightly spicier style by sprinkling a pinch of ground cloves in the batter.
- ◆ Add a whole clove to pear poaching liquid; the spice, with its hint of vanilla, has an affinity to pears as well as to apples, peaches, and plums.
- ◆ Store a few cloves in sugar to give the sugar a warm, spicy flavor. Use the sugar over baked apples or with fresh strawberries.
- ◆ Enjoy the fragrance of cloves around the house. Add a few cloves to potpourri or make a pomander ball by poking an orange with whole cloves in a pretty pattern.





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Baking Better Cookies Through Chemistry

Cookies are a microcosm of baking, in which the chemistry of each ingredient has a huge effect on the finished cookie. You make many decisions when deciding on a cookie recipe: which kind of flour, which fat, which sweetener, which leavener, whether to add liquid. Your choices determine if the cookie will be flat and crisp or soft and puffy, pale gold or deep brown.

FLOUR AFFECTS COLOR, TEXTURE, AND SPREAD

Higher protein flours, such as bread or unbleached flour, can create more of the strong elastic gluten that makes cookies chewy. If cookies are too crumbly, use bread flour and sprinkle it with a little water (to form gluten) before combining the flour with other ingredients. Cake flour and bleached all-purpose flour have lower protein levels. If you prefer a tender cookie, rather than a chewy one. choose one of these flours and mix the fat, sugar, and flour before you add any liquid.

The amount of protein in flour affects browning. The more protein in the flour, the browner the cookies. Cookies made with unbleached all-purpose or bread flour will be browner than those made with bleached all-purpose or cake flour. Low-protein cake flouris acidic, which reduces browning even more.

Higher protein flours absorb more liquid, so cookies

Softasile Will BLACKED SEVER BENGATED SEVER BENGATE

Unbleached all-purpose flour will make chewier, browner cookies than cake flour.

will spread slightly less than those made from the same recipe with lower protein flours. If your recipe uses cake flour and an egg, however, you'll get less spread because the acidic flour makes the egg set fast.

Protein levels also affect a cookie's height. Lower protein flours don't absorb as much water as high-protein flours, so they make more steam, which puffs cookies more.

SUGAR TYPE INFLUENCES BROWNING AND TEXTURE

Corn syrup is mainly glucose—a sugar with a structure that makes it brown at a lower temperature than granulated sugar (sucrose). Cookies made with corn syrup will be browner.

Sweeteners can make a cookie crisp or soft. Cookies made with sugars that are high in sucrose (granulated sugar and maple syrup) or glucose (corn syrup) tend to stay crisp. Sweeteners high in fructose, such as honey, act differently. Fructose is hygroscopic (meaning it absorbs water from the air), so cookies made with a lot of honey get soft upon standing. Brown sugar is also more hygroscopic than granulated sugar.

Brown sugar is also slightly acidic, so it can help limit spread in cookies using an egg.

BUTTER MAKES COOKIES SPREAD MORE

Butter melts immediately in a hot oven, so cookies made



Honey and brown sugar absorb water from the air so cookies made with these sweeteners get soft.

Change the chemistry, change the character

The walnut-chocolate chip cookies on the left are puffy, soft, and pale gold. We used:

INGREDIENT	RESULT
cake flour (low protein, acid)	more steam and puff; less browning
shortening (high melting point)	less spread
all brown sugar (hygroscopic, acid)	soft and moist; less spread when used with egg
egg	moisture for puff; less spread with acidic ingredients

For the thin, crisp cookies on the right, we used:

RESULT
browning
more spread; browning
browning
browning; crisp
crisp
no puff; more spread



with butter will spread. Also, butter is only about 80% fat, with about 18% water, which contributes to spread. Shortening, on the other hand, melts at a higher temperature, so cookies have more time to set in the oven and will stay domed.

The fat you use makes a small difference in how brown your cookies will be. Since protein promotes browning, cookies made with shortening (which has no protein) will be slightly less brown than those made with butter (which has a little protein).

LEAVENINGS AFFECT COLOR MORE THAN RISE

Your choice of baking powder or baking soda influences

color but rarely leavening. Baking powder contains baking soda and enough acid to neutralize the soda and doesn't influence the color of cookies. But baking soda by itself is alkaline and is a major contributor to browning.

In most recipes, I teaspoon of baking powder or ½ teaspoon of baking soda will leaven 1 cup of flour. When the leavening is much over this, the bubbles get big, rise to the surface, and pop, and



Butter tastes great but helps cookies spread more.

there goes your leavening. In most cookie recipes, the amount of soda is excessive for leavening and is used primarily for color.

More liquid means more spread, unless you use an egg. Many cookie recipes have no liquid per se but depend on the water in the butter (about 18%) to make enough gluten to hold the cookies together. Other recipes may use 1 or 2 tablespoons of liquid or an egg. The amount and type of liquid can influence the spread and puff of cookies.

Usually the more liquid (if it isn't an egg), the more the spread. When an egg contributes the liquid, there's little tendency to spread. This



Large amounts of baking soda make cookies brown.

is particularly true if there's an acidic ingredient (such as brown sugar, cake flour, or chocolate), which makes the egg set quickly to limit spread. A bit of extra liquid, or the liquid from an egg, turns to steam and can make cookies puff more.

Shirley O. Corriher, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, teaches cooking and food science across the country.

She's the author of CookWise (William Morrow, 1997).

COOKING

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I'll admit that I was leery the first time a restaurant served me olive oil in place of butter.

There we were, surrounded by candlelight, white linen, and fresh flowers. Our black-suited waiter bustled up with a basket piled with crusty bread, and then—what was he doing? He filled a small bowl with golden-green oil and set it, with a flourish, right in the middle of the table.

We stared.

"For your bread," he said, and departed.

Well, why not? We dipped a bit of the rosemary-scented bread into the olive oil, cautiously tasted, and my, oh my. This was wonderful.

That evening I joined the olive oil revolution that's sweeping the country as people discover how healthy, delicious, and versatile olive oil can be. Across the States, savvy cooks are exploring Mediterranean cuisines, which are based on olive oil.

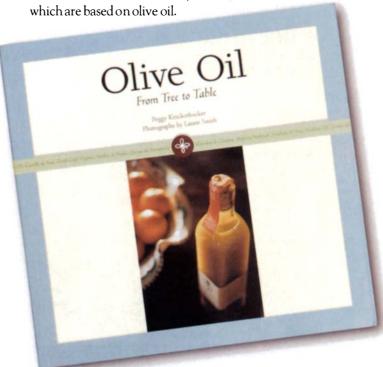
Indulging a Passion for Olive Oil

And now, for those who love the velvet texture and infinite flavors of olive oil and are curious to learn more, as well as for those who are just discovering its unique appeal, there's a new and excellent resource. San Francisco writer Peggy Knickerbocker's latest cookbook, Olive Oil: From Tree to Table, not only offers recipes

for such mouthwatering dishes as Spaghetti with Lemony Seared Scallops, Artichokes Angelo, and Pork, Clam & Chorizo Stew, but also answers questions like what is extravirgin anyway, and how do you judge the quality of the artisan oils now crowding the market?

Knickerbocker takes you quite literally from tree

Knickerbocker's book is for everyone who loves the velvet texture and infinite flavors of olive oil and is curious to learn more.



Olive Oil: From Tree to Table, by Peggy Knickerbocker. Chronicle Books, 1997. \$19.95, softcover; 168 pp. ISBN 0-8118-1350-9.

through production to table, revealing the painstaking process and infinite pride which is the foundation of high-quality olive oils. You'll learn that each mature olive tree gives only three to four quarts of oil, that Spain produces almost half of the world's olive oil (much of which is bottled in Italy and sold as Italian oil), and that California's production, while growing rapidly, accounts for a mere half percent of the total. Knickerbocker also gives a fascinating account of the resurgence of California family growers who are revitalizing hundred-year-old orchards first planted by

Mediterranean immigrants, and how they're using these fruits to create world-class olive oils for American cooks.

Her discussion of olive oil grades is at once informative and entertaining. It was nice to learn there's nothing wrong with bulk oils—they're blended for consistency especially when used in cooking. And Knickerbocker is refreshingly blunt in her assessment of the new "lite" oils. They are, she says, "an attempt to get cooks to buy an inferior oil that is called lite simply because it is light in color and flavor, not in calories or fat."

Once you've read the sections on olive oil grades, color, and taste, you'll feel confident choosing the right oils for you. Knickerbocker suggests using different oils to enhance particular dishes: a full-bodied Greek oil to complement a tomato and feta salad, a mild Provençal oil for subtle background flavor, or a lively, peppery Tuscan oil to wake up a simple pasta. Most of the recipes list recommended oils. But as the author points out, "There are no strict rules for which type of oil is best—it's all a matter of taste—your taste."

Olive Oil gives tips on how to shop for fine oils (hint: don't go to the supermarket) and recommends several bulk brands widely available in the States—Bertolli, Colavita, and Sasso. To find which oils you enjoy most, you can even follow Knickerbocker's instructions on how to have an olive oil tasting at home.

But as fun and useful as this section of the book is, recipes form the heart of *Olive Oil*. Richly varied, they cover everything from classic starters like the garlic and anchovy dip Bagna Cauda and Provençal Garlic Soup to

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REVIEWS

desserts and sweets, such as Orange Ginger Cake and Dried Fig Breakfast Bread. The emphasis is on the vibrant flavors of the Mediterranean: Kalamata Olives with Orange Rind; Arugula & Spinach with Fried Prosciutto, Pine Nuts & Dried Figs; and Baked Tuscan White Beans. There's a splash of America's newly adventurous tastes, too, in dishes like California Crab Cakes on a Bed of Citrus; Wild Mushroom Polenta with Escarole Salad (inspired by Boston chef Joe Simone), and Grilled Radicchio & Belgian Endive brushed with rosemary sprigs dipped in olive oil.

A few culinary-minded friends helped me try some of Knickerbocker's recipes, and we found them to be straightforward and easy to follow. The only difficulty we encountered was that a few ingredients aren't easily available-water buffalo bocconcini, for example, or fresh mullet roe. The dishes we tried (Tenderloin of Pork with Blood Oranges & Dark Rum, Tatooed Potatoes with Rosemary, Caramelized Roasted Vegetables, Spinach with Pine Nuts & Raisins, and crispy-crunchy sweet Polenta Coins) were all deliciously successful.

Caramelized Roasted Vegetables

From Olive Oil: From Tree to Table, by Peggy Knickerbocker, Chronicle Books, 1997.

This dish is a wonderful accompaniment to roasted chicken or any meat or fish, and it is a hearty vegetarian main course. You can integrate whatever is in season, whatever catches your eye at the market. My friend Susan Andrews introduced me to this method of separating vegetables into two or three baking dishes so they are not crowded and have a chance to become crispy and brown. Serves six to eight.

1 sweet potato, peeled and cut into ½-inch-thick slices

- 1 russet potato, unpeeled, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- 2 green zucchini, cut into ¾-inch-thick slices 2 yellow zucchini or summer squash, cut into ¾-inch-thick slices
- 1 eggplant, cubed, salted, allowed to drain for 30 minutes in a colander, and patted dry
 1 head garlic, unpeeled and broken into cloves
 2 yellow onions, cut into 8 wedges each
 1 fennel bulb, trimmed and sliced into wedges
 1 or more red bell peppers, seeded and cut lengthwise into ½-inch-wide strips

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
2 fresh rosemary sprigs, or 1 tablespoon dried
rosemary

Preheat an oven to 400 degrees F.

Arrange all the vegetables in 3 or more pans, drizzle with the olive oil, and

sprinkle with salt and pepper. Using your hands, toss the vegetables so that all of them are evenly coated. Break up 1 of the rosemary sprigs and distribute it over the vegetables, or sprinkle the dried rosemary over them.

Roast until the vegetables are brown and tender, depending upon the baking vessel used, and the size and variety of the vegetables. If you use a glazed terracotta baking dish, the vegetables will take about 1½ hours to cook. In a glass dish they will take a little over an hour, and in a cast-iron skillet the roasting time will be only about 50 minutes. You can also use roasting pans or baking sheets.

Remove pans from oven and transfer vegetables to a large platter. Serve immediately with a sprig of rosemary on top.

Like all good recipes, these inspired a heated discussion on how they could be adapted for individual tastes. "More garlic in the marinade." "No, no, just a touch of cinnamon or allspice." "Is there ginger in the cookies?" Cooking from Olive Oil offers a great way to explore the versatility of olive oil and enjoy the company of

friends at the same time.

You could give Olive Oil to any of your friends who like to cook, and you'd know they'd be thrilled. In fact, a copy of this book, together perhaps with a bottle of rich, smooth Castello di Ama from Tuscany or of Ligurian Raineri with its delicate, buttery taste, would be an ideal holiday gift. The book itself is lovely; Laurie Smith's elegantly simple photos grace many of its pages, and anyone who appreciates the nuances of fine cooking will treasure this thoroughly pleasing book.

Kay Fahey writes for a living and cooks for pleasure. She lives in Reno, Nevada. ◆

"I'd be torn between Nina Simonds's Asian Noodles, Sheila Lukins's USA Cookbook, and The San Francisco Chronicle Cookbook."

—Nach Waxman, owner, Kitchen Arts & Letters bookstore, New York City "Oh...so many. Barbara Kafka's Roasting: A Simple Art, Naomi Duguid and Jeffrey Alford's Flatbreads & Flavors: A Baker's Atlas, and definitely Sheila Lukins's USA Cookbook." —David Page, chef/owner, Drovers Tap Room and Home, New York City

Gift books for cooks

What cookbook would you most like to receive this year as a holiday gift? "I'd have to say Colman Andrews's Flavors of the Riviera: Discovering Real Mediterranean Cooking." —Catherine Brandel, chef/instructor, Culinary Institute of America at Greystone, St. Helena, California

"I would absolutely want Claudia Roden's Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York. She must have really poured her heart into this incredible book."

—Maggie Glezer, baking consultant, Atlanta

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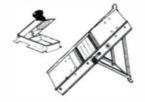
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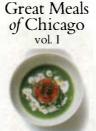
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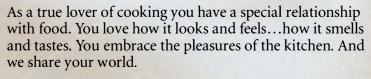
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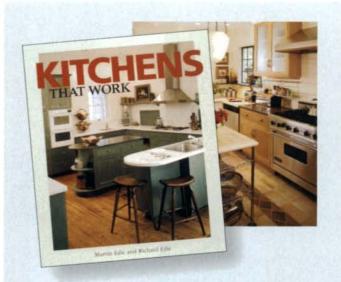
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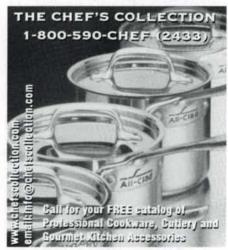
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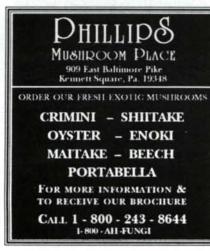
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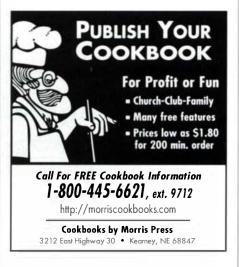
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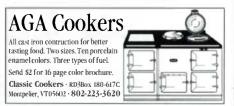
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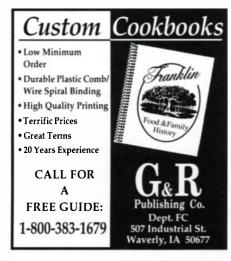


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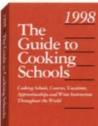
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Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	total	ories from fat	Protein (g)	Carb (g)	total	sat	s (g) mono	poly	Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
Warm Oysters Bathed in Cream	36	160	140	3	3	15	9	4	1	65	125	0	
Pappardelle with Poached Egg & Caviar	36	350	140	16	35	16	8	5	3	265	1200	2	
Roast Pork Shoulder	36	620	250	50	39	28	10	13	3	175	600	3	7-ounce serving
Potato & Celery Root Anna	37	280	140	5	34	16	10	5	1	40	320	5	
Triple Caramel Cake	38	570	320	6	59	35	21	10	2	185	100	1	based on 12 servings
Classic Bread Stuffing	42	90	40	2	11	4.5	2.5	1.5	0.5	10	220	1	½ cup stuffing
Sauerkraut & Rye Bread Stuffing	42	100	50	2	11	6	2	3	1	5	390	2	1/2 cup stuffing
Fennel & Escarole Stuffing	43	100	45	2	12	5	1	3	1	0	210	2	½ cup stuffing
Cornbread & Sausage Stuffing	43	110	50	4	11	6	3	2	1	20	450	1	1/2 cup stuffing
Basic Cornbread	43	80	20	3	13	2.5	1	0.5	0.5	20	440	1	1/2 cup crumbs
Creamy Collards with Smithfield Ham	46	320	240	8	13	27	13	11	2	80	420	5	based on 10 servings
Butternut Squash & Onion Casserole	46	240	180	4	12	20	10	8	2	160	660	2	based on 12 servings
Green Beans, Brown Butter & Pecans	47	160	120	2	9	13	6	5	1	25	430	3	based on 10 servings
Mushroom & Roasted Garlic "Succotash"	47	120	40	5	16	4.5	1.5	2	0.5	5	180	3	
Sweet Potato & Grits "Spoon Bread"	47	210	40	4	39	4.5	2	1.5	0.5	60	630	2	
Maple-Brined, Smoked Grilled Turkey	49	600	240	73	12	26	7	9	7	210	1650	0	9-ounce serving
Traditional Peanut Brittle	55	120	40	2	20	4	1	2	1	5	75	1	per ounce
Potato & Ham Frittata	58	360	220	23	12	24	6	13	3	510	1330	1	with 3 Tbs. olive oil total
Spinach & Mushroom Frittata	58	350	250	22	6	28	9	14	3	515	540	3	with 3 Tbs. olive oil total
Asparagus & Wild Mushroom Frittata	58	290	210	17	5	23	6	12	3	495	640	1	with 3 Tbs. olive oil total
Chorizo & Corn Frittata	58	520	340	34	10	38	15	16	4	555	1220	1	no additional oil
Smoked Trout & Avocado Frittata	58	300	200	23	5	22	5	9	3	515	730	3	no additional oil
Brioche à Tête	63	260	120	6	28	14	8	4	1	110	390	1	per brioche
Ginger Crackles	68	100	40	1	15	4	2	1.5	0.5	15	55	0	per cookie
Coffee Thins	68	70	35	1	8	4	2.5	1	0	10	15	0	per cookie
Cream Cheese Swirls	68	90	50	1	9	6	3	2	0	15	15	0	per cookie
Hazelnut Toffee Squares	69	80	45	1	8	5	2.5	1.5	0.5	10	10	0	per cookie
Lemon Snow Drops	69	100	45	1	12	5	3	1.5	0.5	15	10	0	per cookie
Chocolate Cut-Outs	69	70	35	1	8	4	2.5	1	0	10	5	0	per cookie
Lidia Bastianich's Capellini Capricciosi	98	640	310	19	61	35	11	18	3	30	860	5	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

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Lidia Bastianich's Capellini Capricciosi (Spicy Capellini)

You can find *peperoncini*—hot, pickled peppers also known as Tuscan peppers—in the supermarket near pickles and relishes or with other imported Italian products. *Serves six*.

1/3 cup olive oil
 8 slices of bacon, chopped
 2 medium onions, thinly sliced
 10 peperoncini, drained, seeded and chopped
 3 cups crushed peeled Italian

3 cups crushed peeled Italian tomatoes (about one 35-oz. can, drained)

1/4 tsp. salt

 Ib. capellini (angel hair) pasta
 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, preferably parmigianoreggiano

1/3 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley (optional)

In a large, nonreactive skillet, heat 3 Tbs. of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the bacon and cook until lightly browned, about 10 min. Add the onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 15 min. Add the peperoncini, tomatoes, and salt, and simmer for about 10 min.

Meanwhile, bring 4 qt. salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until al dente, about 3 min. Drain the pasta and toss it with the rest of the olive oil. Stir in the sauce. Add the cheese, toss well, and serve immediately, garnished with the parsley if you like.

A Soul-Warming Pasta from the Pantry

This delicious pasta—an irresistible blend of crisp, smoky bacon, hot pickled peppers, fruity olive oil, sweet onions, and tangy tomatoes—is what I crave in winter. It's hearty and satisfying yet simple to prepare. This is the dish I make when I've returned home tired from a long weekend away. It needs little prepa-

ration or cleanup, and the ingredients are always in my pantry and fridge.

If you don't keep a jar of peperoncini in the house already, you will after trying this dish. These pickled peppers are hot, but not too hot, with just a touch of sweetness.

When you make this dish, don't give in to the temptation

to drain the bacon before adding the onions. Though it isn't low in fat, the dish is perfectly balanced, not greasy at all.

In Italy, a dish like this may be served as a *primo*, or first course, but I often serve this as a main course. I'd follow it withone of my favorite salads: arugula, shaved *parmigiano*reggiano, and thinly sliced mushrooms, tossed with a light lemon and olive oil vinaigrette. A good Chianti goes perfectly.

Lidia Bastianich is the executive chef and co-owner of Felidia in New York City, and co-owner of Becco and Frico. The author of La Cucina di Lidia (Doubleday, 1990), she is working on a 26-part TV series for PBS.



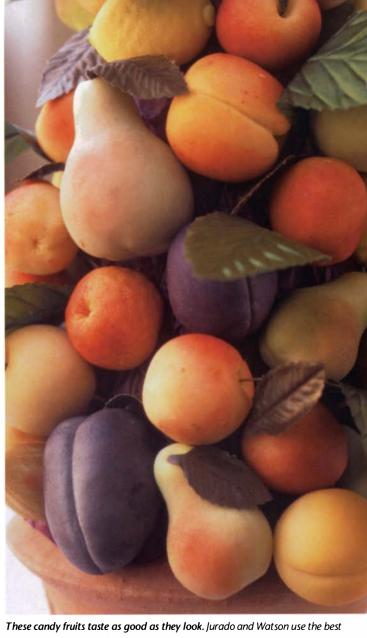
ARTISAN FOODS

Festive Fruit From Marzipan

"It's magical, to take a lump of beige paste and turn it into something beautiful," says marzipan maker Kim Jurado (below right). Jurado and her partner, Gail Watson, own Bella Dulce (in Spanish, "beautiful sweet"), located in Watson's Manhattan loft, where they craft almond candy oranges, figs, lemons, cherries, pears, and other fruits. Jurado, who is half Mexican and half Swedish, learned to make marzipan from her mother, who "came here from Sweden with her almond grinder."



"We find ourselves arguing about the exact color of a plum," say Watson (left) and Jurado, "but we both agree that the almond flavor of the marzipan should be really rich and fragrant."



These candy fruits taste as good as they look. Jurado and Watson use the best almond paste they can find, with the highest proportion of almonds to sugar. (Some marzipan makers add extra sugar to preserve the candy and make it chewy.)



Base coloring for a fruit is kneaded into the almond paste, and simple tools are used for the not-sosimple art of making the fruits look amazingly lifelike.



Each piece is shaped individually to achieve a natural-looking form. You'll see no flat edge or seam as you do with mass-produced marzipan that's pressed into molds.



Jurado rolls citrus on the fine side of a box grater. Each piece of marzipan captures a fruit's natural features—the cheek of a peach, the dimples of citrus peel.



A cherry's blush is brushed right on. Jurado doesn't air-brush liquid dye as some marzipan makers do, but uses a fine-bristled paint brush instead. Finely ground vegetable powder gives the most even, natural color.